

THE STORY
OF THE TWELVE



*A
Dramatic
Poem*

ARTHUR HAY
STORROW



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To Mr Beamish

with sincere regards

From Mr & Mrs Storow.

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THE STORY OF THE TWELVE



THE
STORY OF THE TWELVE

A DRAMATIC POEM
IN EIGHT BOOKS

BY
ARTHUR HAY STORROW

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TO THE
REVERED AND BELOVED MEMORY
OF
MY FATHER

1907

1907

1907

TO THE READER

THE writer's purpose has been to present, in the form of a Dramatic Poem, the story of the Divine Man, Jesus of Nazareth, as viewed from the standpoint of the twelve disciples during the actual occurrence of the events chronicled in the Gospels.

Although the traditional outlines of that fourfold narrative have been mainly followed, it has in no way been intended merely to transcribe the same into poetic form in these pages. Opportunity has been taken for the exercise of a reasonable and legitimate imagination in dealing with, what may be termed, the unrecorded background of that wondrous story, the detailed presentment of which, though not essential to the sufficient purposes of a Divine Revelation, yet doubtless contained elements of profound human interest and significance in the unfolding of the greatest Drama in the world's history.

The method of treatment adopted here has been that of imagining the twelve disciples assembled in conclave at certain stages or crises in their Master's career, to discuss the varying fortunes of their common cause, and the personal relations of the Master Himself thereto.

We are somewhat too prone to consider the disciples only in the transfiguring light which is

To the Reader

thrown back upon them from the finally revealed glory of their Divine Lord, whose true nature and purpose, however, they came to realize very slowly, and, indeed, not fully until after His resurrection. The attempt made here to portray them as twelve men representing perhaps a complete cycle of very human divergencies of character and temperament, interacting upon each other amid such unique circumstances, suggests possibilities in dramatic art to which the writer is only too conscious he has rendered scant justice.

It is, however, earnestly hoped that, whatever may be considered the literary merits or demerits of his effort in this respect, its general purport, so far from detracting in any way from the dignity and greatness of that Sublime Figure upon whom all centres, will be found to enhance those qualities by this presentation of the testimony of those who knew and loved Him in the days of His flesh.

If objection be taken to the term "dramatic," as applied to a work of this kind, on the score of a lack of dramatic unity and interest—so far as these depend on greater spontaneity of dialogue and action—there appears little to say in reply, except that nothing in the nature of a Play was intended. The theme itself seemed to require a more diffuse and didactic method of treatment than is strictly compatible with the use of the term "dramatic," except in an admittedly modified and partial sense.

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PERSONS PRESENTED

SIMON PETER

JAMES

JOHN

ANDREW

PHILIP

NATHANAEL (BARTHOLOMEW)

MATTHEW

THOMAS (DIDYMUS)

SIMON THE ZEALOT

JAMES THE SON OF ALPHÆUS

JUDAS THADDÆUS

JUDAS ISCARIOT

DISCIPLES OF JESUS

JOHN MARK

A FRIEND OF THE DISCIPLES

JESUS OF NAZARETH

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THE STORY OF THE TWELVE

BOOK I

THE NEW MASTER

SCENE.—*At Bethabara, on east side of the Jordan.*

TIME.—*The second day after the calling of the first disciples by Jesus, who had been pointed out as “The Lamb of God,” by John the Baptist, on the banks of the Jordan.*

PRESENT.—*John, the son of Zebedee, Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael (Bartholomew).*

JOHN

“Behold the Lamb of God !”—Was it not thus
The Baptist, two days since on Jordan’s banks,
Spake of the Nazarene ? Then eagerly
We gazed on Him, of whom John oft before
Had told strange tidings. Dignity and grace
Were in His mien, and on His face the light
Of one who holds high commune with his soul,
And with some inward vision is enwrapp’d.
Not keenly strung—as arrow to the bow,

The Story of the Twelve

Or sword aleap from scabbard on its work—
Like to the Baptist ! Yet of Him John said,
“ There cometh after me, One mightier far,
The latchet of whose shoes I am, indeed,
Not worthy to unloose.” Ay, thus spake he
Who, fearing no man’s face, doth smite with scorn
The righteous mask from off the unrighteous heart,
And bids repent Gentile and Jew alike.
Nay, e’en he callèd Abram’s boasted seed
“ Offspring of vipers ” ! Have we not oft heard,
Clear as a challenge trumpet, ring his cry—
“ Repent ye ! ere the fan of Him, who comes
To cleanse His threshing-floor, sweep ye as chaff,
He burneth up with fire unquenchable ” ?
It was this Nazarene of whom he spake !
For so had been reveal’d, and was confirm’d
By mystic sign to John when Jesus sought
To be baptized of him.

For, as a dove,
Dwelt heavenly light upon Him ; and a voice,
As with angelic music, did proclaim,
“ In my belovèd Son I am well-pleased.”
Then, from that wondrous moment, John discern’d
That He, for whom he but prepared the way,
Had surely come at last : and for himself,
The herald’s task fulfill’d !

ANDREW

It is that thought,
Which, e’en amidst his joy, its shadow casts
On the great heart of John, and which he seeks

The New Master

To hide from us in vain. Did we not know
Him free from all ignoble, we had fear'd
Lest he should deem our love too quickly turn'd
Unto the Nazarene. Yet now, in sooth,
Since he himself hath urged it, God forbid
That we should be less generous and begrudge
Due honour to the Baptist !

JOHN

It were base
If we, disciples long avow'd of John,
Now honour'd him the less ! Have we not seen
How he of late hath grown in burning zeal,
Like to the ancient Prophets of our race ?
Yet ne'er such greatness have we seen in him
As this, wherein he yields with willing hand
The palm unto another,—e'en to one
Of untried youth, and all unknown to fame.
Oh, it were hard for one so masterful
To stand aside ; and, with so rare a grace,
Himself proclaim the passing of his power
To Him he heralded ! Yet is not this
The end to which John ever drew our hopes ?
Ye mind how when at first 'twas told that one
Like to Elijah, clad with camel's hair,
Preach'd and baptized upon the Jordan's banks,—
Men question'd whence he came ! Then was it told
That he the son of Zacharias was,
And of Elizabeth. And certain scribes
Recall'd the wonders rumour'd at his birth,
And how the Angel Gabriel announced

The Story of the Twelve

He would bring joy to Israel, and prepare
The highway of the Lord !

PHILIP

But didst thou learn
More of these things, O son of Zebedee,
And at the time thou heardest ? For, in truth,
Such rumours have been many.

JOHN

Verily ;
For I, with others—thinking he himself
Perchance might be Messiah !—sought and ask'd.
Then fiercely answer'd he as one, indeed,
We charged with blasphemy :—" Me, sinful son
Of Zacharias !—deemest thou to be
Israel's Deliverer : the Anointed One !
And without sin ? Nay, I but herald Him :
And e'en for that had judged myself unfit ;
But forth into the wilderness was urged,
As by resistless spirit, and a vow
To my dead father given."

Yet still in doubt,
I ask'd him of the rumours whisper'd long ;—
How the strange babe of birth miraculous,
As told of the Messiah, had been slain
At Bethlehem by Herod—father e'en
Of him now troubling Israel ! Once again
He turn'd with scorn upon us :—" Think ye thus
The purpose of the Lord be set at naught,
And Israel's hope proved but an empty dream ? "

The New Master

Then spake he of such heavenly wonderments
As had appear'd what time was Jesus born
At Bethlehem, whereunto Joseph went
With Mary for enrolment. . . . There it happ'd
That Mary was deliver'd, and brought forth
Her first-born in a manger ; for no room
Was there within the inn. Yet was it told
To certain shepherds by celestial signs ;
And from the East came Magi seeking Him,
Whose star proclaim'd a King ! When Herod
heard,
With jealous wrath he sought to slay the child.
Then further told he how the babe was borne
To Egypt by his parents, till such time
As they return'd in safety to Judæa.
Thence were they led to Galilee, and dwelt
At lowly Nazareth, where grew the child
In quietness and humble circumstance.
So had the wondrous things, foretold of Him,
Pass'd from the minds of men.

PHILIP

But whence knew John
These matters ? And wherefore this tarrying
Of One bethought Messiah ?

JOHN

Know ye not,
Elizabeth, his mother, cousin was
To Mary, wife of Joseph, who belong'd

The Story of the Twelve

To David's lineage ? And when we ask'd
Concerning this long silence and delay,
John answer'd us as by some spirit moved
Beyond our ken or his : " He tarried thus
Not less by will Divine—than He that will
Fulfilleth now He comes ! "

NATHANAEL

Can it so be
That this is now the long fore-witness'd Christ,
The true Messiah ? Since that moment strange,
When first I saw Him, and my secret quest
Stood naked in His all-revealing sight ;—
I seem as one who dreams a pleasant dream,
Yet fears to wake, lest he should lose again
Blest visions of the night !

PHILIP

When at the first
I told thee of Him, thou, indeed, didst ask,
" Can any good come out of Nazareth ? "
But when I brought thee to Him,—judged He not,
That thou hadst play'd the cynic with thy lips,
Yet wast at heart a guileless Israelite ?
Then with such words didst thou belie thy scorn,
As brought the mantling blush to One from whom
Thou hadst surprised a secret ! I but spake
Of Him with sudden hope, as One foretold
By Moses and the Prophets—Joseph's son
From Nazareth. But thou, unto His face,
Straightway proclaim'd Him as the Son of God,

The New Master

And King of Israel ! Then to thy great faith
He promised glorious visions—greater e'en
Than such as Jacob saw. . . .

NATHANAEL

Scarce can I now
Believe that so I spake ! But when at once
He read my secret thoughts, and credit gave
For faith I had not credited myself,—
Then some strange voice within me seem'd to cry
Such words as now most unfamiliar sound
Unto my wondering ears !

SIMON PETER

And even so
He seem'd to call my soul, as if from out
Some distant shore of being I had known—
When as a boy I dallied by the boats
With Andrew, and the sea of Galilee
Lay hush'd in Sabbath calm. Then oft there stole
Upon my spirit longings, vague but sweet,
For steadfastness and truth. Not much of these
The recent years have seen ; for hard the toil
And scant the gain of fishers by the lake :
And something of the wild and fitful sea,
Methinks, is in my blood ! Yet when at first
My brother, seeking, brought me unto Him,
He straight appear'd to know me better far
Than I had known myself.—“ Thou art,” said He,
“ Simon the son of John : thou shalt be call'd
Cephas.” And, lo, my heart thrill'd glad response

The Story of the Twelve

At the new-given name ; and in me leapt
A spirit as to challenge ! So He touch'd,
With but a single word, some hidden chord
Within my deepest soul, that I found faith
In mine own self, since He found faith in me !

ANDREW

Ah, Simon, it was thus because I knew
Thou hadst so much to give, and He to gain,
That I would bring thee face to face with Him !
For I was fain that such an One should learn
What strength and constancy thou hast at heart,
Despite thy fitfulness. I mind how oft
Quick courage and resource have held the stake
'Twixt life and death, when out upon the lake
Sudden hath swept the storm, and thro' the night
With dragging nets we drifted, sore bestead
To make the shore at dawn. Then, know I well,
The bravest heart and steadiest hand were thine,
To weather thro' the tempest and the dark !
He who hath call'd us now would fain enlist
Thy courage in some worthier enterprise,
Whereon He hath embark'd, holding Himself
Appointed of the Lord. For on that day
We saw Him first, went two of us at eve
To His abode, where He talk'd long with us.
And John will bear me witness, that we ne'er
Heard speech so marvellous ! So high, so deep
Was His discourse of things in Heaven and earth ;
Our hearts, amazed, unlawful seem'd to list
To words scarce meant for mortals !

The New Master

JOHN

By my troth,
And by that sacred call from Nazareth—
Whereof He spake—to be baptized of John,
It was as Andrew saith ! He seem'd as one
Constrain'd awhile, who could not well express,
To our dull ears, the thoughts that yet did burn
To find expression—thoughts which long had lain
As seed within His soul, but stirr'd at length
To seek their bourgeoning. Thus did He speak
As of a Spirit which had brooded Him,
These thirty years, with ever-growing sense
Of some great destiny, and had at length
Urged Him to be baptized. As in a dream
We listen'd to His words ; fearing at first
Lest He be but another, and the last
Of many prophets who, alas, have proved
Deceivers of our hopes. Yet there was that
In all He spake which no alliance held
With thoughts of self-ambition, or pretence.
Nor was it earthly power, whereon He dwelt—
Which in revolt against imperious Rome,
Should hasten Israel's freedom—but as of
Some kingdom based on greater righteousness
Than claim'd the law of Moses. Then also
Referr'd He darkly unto prophecies
Concerning one predestined of the Lord
To suffering and woe ! But when of this
We ask'd Him further, He bade us to search
The Scriptures for ourselves, and turn'd, and spake
Of other things the while. . . .

The Story of the Twelve

SIMON PETER

And said He aught
Of means whereby He seeks to gain the end
For which He hath appear'd, and Israel waits ?
Or if it cometh quickly ?

JOHN

Of such things
He told us not, and marvell'd we at One
So great, and yet of such humility.
Less spake He of Himself, than of the ills
Which mark our chosen race : for these did seem
A burden on Him laid. Not as the scribes
Spake He, with words familiar grown, and void
Of inward power and passion ; but as One
Within whose soul there dwelt a knowledge deep
Of things so rare in spirit and Divine,
As pass'd beyond our ken ! Yet, as we heard,
Did He constrain our hearts with such consent
Of trust and love, as e'en with magic touch
A skilful player from his harp doth woo
Sweet music, as he will.

Henceforth I needs
Must follow His behest, since He hath deem'd
Me worthy, who have heretofore been named
A follower of the Baptist. So, not less
Is it the will of John.

ANDREW

Now verily,
O son of Zebedee, I keep, as thou,

The New Master

The plighted troth we two together gave
Just ere we left Him, and the stars had paled
Before returning dawn. Nor time nor place
We reck'd of, for such converse as we held
With Him from eventide ! And when at last,
With hand upon us laid, and eyes that search'd
Our very souls within, He ask'd of us :
“ Will ye not follow me ? for I have need
Of such, unto the end which now I seek.”—
We answer'd Him, as if a spirit moved
Our lips to utterance : “ We follow Thee.
For we believe Thou art Messiah, sent
By will Divine to Israel ! ”

SIMON PETER

I also

Will follow now henceforth the Nazarene ;
For ye confirm the hopes that sprang in me
When first He call'd me “ Cephas ” ! For, in truth,
Ne'er met I one whom I more joyfully
Would serve as Master !

PHILIP

Yea, for such an One
Seems in all grace and wisdom—He of whom
Spake Moses and the Prophets !

NATHANAEL

As for me,

I may not other than obey the voice,
That with such wondrous promises hath waked
My heart to eager longing.

The Story of the Twelve

JOHN

It is well :

And on the morrow we will also go
To Cana with Him, where He doth attend
The marriage feast of kinsfolk. Such great things
As these now charging Him do urge, methinks,
To speedy utterance. May we be quick
Not less in understanding, and as those
Prepared for mighty issues !

BOOK II

THE KINGDOM

SCENE.—*At Capernaum, in the house of Simon Peter.*

TIME.—*The evening of the day on which Jesus had preached the Sermon on the Mount.*

PRESENT.—*The Twelve Disciples.*

SIMON PETER

Were ever heard such words as fell this day
From the great Teacher's lips ? In very truth,
When first there issued forth, in cadence soft,
Such gracious benedictions, each did sound
Melodiously unto the gladden'd ear,
As sounds returning rain on parchèd grass.
And did ye mark how all the curious throng,
Expectant of some sign, soon nearer drew,
Contented but to listen ? 'Tis not mine—
Who am but roughly versed—to testify
Of such great sayings. But now doth He choose
Others to serve with us, whom first He call'd
To leave our nets and boats beside the lake.
And, Matthew, thou art from the seat of toll—
To clerkly habit used. 'Tis rather thine
To pen such doctrine as hath ne'er been heard
From any Rabbi's lips ! For strange it was

The Story of the Twelve

To hear, not wonted threatenings of the law,
But blessings ; yea, and not alone to those
Of Israel's covenant, but as if all
Might freely claim them of Him. Verily,
It soundeth a hard saying ! Doth He count
The Gentile and the heathen to be free
And favour'd as our seed ? Altho' His words
Held my heart captive by the wondrous spell
They cast upon my pity, I could wish
Either that He had spoken more—or less !
Nor shamed so openly the sores which lie
Beneath Levitic cloaks, or clearer told
How He doth purpose to unloose the yoke
Of Cæsar from our necks ! For as He sped
His shafts against the scribes and Pharisees,
Saw ye not how—forgetful of their strife—
Suspicious fear drew them in common bond
Against the Nazarene ? And yet, perchance,
It matters not, since He so quickly gain'd
The favour of the people ; for He spake
With winsome grace, yet with authority
As all did marvel at ! Nay, spite of much
Perplexing in His words, I follow Him ;
And since He twice hath call'd me from the lake,
With Andrew also, I will stand by Him
Whatever may betide.

ANDREW

Simon, well said !

Yet thou, methinks, hast not less need of Him,
Than He hath need of thee. For mark'd I not—

The Kingdom

After we journey'd with Him thro' Judæa,
Returning thence again to fisher-craft—
How thou didst chafe in secret at the thought
That He no more would seek us, and had gone
To bide at Nazareth? And ne'er can I
Forget the joy betray'd by thee that morn,
When we return'd after a fruitless night,
And found Him on the shore. How eager, thou,
That He should choose our boat wherefrom to
speak

Unto the gather'd throng. And when He bade
Us push far out and ply the nets again,
And lo, they well nigh brake—so great the draught—
'Twas not for glut of fish, that thou didst cast
Thyself low at His feet! So when at length
He bade us to become fishers of men,
I trow thou didst not tarry long awhile
Beside thy lovèd gear!

JAMES

Well do I know
Whereof thou speakest, Andrew, for I sped
With John to aid thy boat. And since that time
Have we throughout Judæa and Galilee
Beheld amazing tokens of His power.
Here at Capernaum, did He not cast
An evil spirit forth in synagogue
Upon the Sabbath day?—and loud it cried:
"I know Thee who thou art, God's Holy One."
And at the set of sun, there came to Him
A multitude of sick who craved His aid;

The Story of the Twelve

And such great deeds of healing He perform'd
As ne'er before were seen. Wide spread His fame,
And when we journey'd forth thro' Galilee,
We saw how once He dared to touch and heal
Even a stricken leper ! When 'twas seen
He sought not Levite's cleansing for Himself,
But bade the heal'd fulfil the law's demands,
Men knew not what to think. Yea, it is true,
He holds Himself not strictly to the law
In word and deed, and spake such things this day
As will arouse suspicion. Yet, withal,
Taught He not so of righteousness and truth,
As did our hearts approve by that adjudged
Within us of the highest ? If this be
The spirit of His Kingdom, 'tis enough
If He doth make it good by such great signs
As are alone Messiah's !

PHILIP

It were well
That ye, who late have come, should likewise hear
Of other signs He wrought. Did we not see—
Who were with Him at Cana's marriage feast—
How when His mother told Him wine had fail'd,
He bade them fill the water pots to brim,
And thence draw forth ; and lo, to goodliest wine
The water turn'd, to the amaze of all !
And when we went up to Jerusalem
At Passover, He drave the traffickers
From out the Temple, bidding them not make
His Father's House a house of merchandise.

The Kingdom

And when the Priests demanded from Him signs
Of His authority, He answer made
With mystic words, which silenced them in awe,
“ Destroy this Temple, and in three days I
Will raise it up ! ” Who knoweth what may mean
So strange an utterance ? But by such grace
And wisdom as this day fell from His lips,
Surely is He Messiah !

SIMON ZELOTES

Ye shall find
None readier in the cause, tho' I but late
Have joined the Galilæan. For I come,
A Zealot, sworn to avenge the hapless fate
Of Judas of Gamala—he who raised
Revolt against Quirinius for the tax
He laid upon our nation. And, in sooth,
The moment is auspicious ; for the land
Doth heave with anger fierce, since Antipas,
Hearing Messiah cometh, now hath cast
The Baptist into prison. Fain I would
The Master's lips had struck the patriot note
More clear and strong this day, and fann'd the zeal,
Rather than roused the enmity of those
Who are the nation's leaders. And I trow
Such words do sting the deeper—being true !
If I too bluntly speak, 'tis that I fear,
Unless He should strike soon, He too may share
The fate of John, who in Machærus lies.
But what say I ?—For surely John awaits
Speedy deliverance at the hands of Him

The Story of the Twelve

He bravely heralded ! Yet God forbid
That Herod's fear to desperate courage rise,
Hearing our Master's fame ! Nay, One who wields
Such power as His will scarce for long delay
Its use to higher ends !

JUDAS ISCARIOT

Thou seest far,
Simon Zelotes, and by that same sign
I also am with thee. From Kerioth
I came in haste, drawn by the spreading fame
Of this new Prophet, who appear'd to be
Messiah come at last ! I sought Him out
And ask'd Him by what means He hoped to bring
Deliverance to Israel. I confess
He spake not with the passionate zeal I thought
To find in such an One, and as more prone
To vision'd phantasies, than unto things
Of practical concern. But yet, in all,
Such grace He show'd, and, by some subtle power,
So held my soul in thrall, that I was wrought
To urge my suit, till He at length did yield
Acceptance of my service. Now again
I am constrain'd to marvel, as do ye,
That less He sought the favour of the scribes
Than of the common people, when He spake
This day upon the Mount. Our ancient law,
By strict observance of Levitic rule,
Hath now become the pride and heritage
Of those who learn'd their Midrash in the schools.
Yet spake He in such-wise, as ne'er was taught

The Kingdom

By Shammai or Hillel ; and 'twere ill
If, to th' unletter'd minds of those who heard,
Should impious doubts arise. Nay, from the first
I fear'd, indeed, from rumour, that He lack'd
Politic lore and wisdom, and bethought
To save Him from such snares. For it hath proved
That oft, for lack of shrewd expediency
And worldly knowledge, many a prophet's fire
Hath at the last burn'd but himself !—And so
Th' enthusiast's cause doth fail, if temper'd not
With wise discrimination. Be it ours
To best direct such power the Master holds—
Avoiding all false issues—to that end
For which Messiah comes, e'en to restore
Her glory unto Israel ! For these things,
It may be such as Simon and myself
Are better versed in temporal affairs
Than some who first were callèd. I know not
How purpose ye to meet the daily needs
Of this our company ? But if 'tis thought
To share a common store, I may, perchance,
Employ my past experience—an ye will—
In its administration.

JOHN

I would ask
Your patience, brethren, for my heart is full
To overflow with thoughts concerning much
Our Master spake this day, and of such things
As have been utter'd here. I may not claim
To understand His mind, beyond ye all,

The Story of the Twelve

Yet from the first hath He vouchsafed to me
Such communings as make His words seem now
But half-expected echoes. And, in sooth,
Wondrous they were, in all wherein unlike
To the vain words of scribes—as is ripe wheat
Unlike to empty chaff. And yet He taught
Not a new law ; but with new power and grace
Did He the old reveal, till hearts were stirr'd
To marvel at such truths as had therein
Been hidden from them. “ Think not that I come,”
Said He, “ the law and prophets to destroy,
But to fulfil.” And even as I heard,
I thought me that, as Aaron’s rod of old,
Lifeless within the ark, to blossom brake
When on it breathed the Eternal !—so e’en now
Our wither’d law had budded ’neath the breath
Of His life-giving spirit. Yet He spake
Such thoughts as long have troubled sore the hearts
Of many of the faithful, but which none
Dare utter save the Baptist. And yet John
Declared he but prepared the way for One,
Baptizing with the Holy Ghost and fire !
Then verily is not this even He
Whom we have heard this day ?

Yet would I urge
Patience to those who burn with Zealots’ fire
To speed the coming Kingdom. For there dwells
Within the Nazarene a spirit such
As worketh not in haste, and otherwise
Than judged of our rash sense. Nor seemeth He
To reckon of craft and might, as to prevail

The Kingdom

'Gainst Cæsar speedily. But so He speaks
Of sin and righteousness, as if He call'd
The nation to repentance, ere could come
Its long awaited hope !

SIMON ZELOTES

But whensoever
Messiah come, can He do mightier works
Than doth this Nazarene ? And if He be,
Wherefore should He not now quickly fulfil
The hopes long held of Him ?

JOHN

Now by all signs
Whereof John spake, and Jesus hath reveal'd,
I may not think Him other ! Yet I mind,
The Baptist dwelt on certain prophecies
Which more accord in spirit and in word
Unto the Nazarene, than with such thoughts
As Israel long hath cherish'd. Of these things
He speaketh not yet fully ; but are some
Of such a spirit, as He deemeth meet
E'en now to be instructed. Such an one
As Nicodemus, master of the law
And kinsman of Gamaliel, hath He drawn
Beneath His spell already. Unto me
He told how, stirr'd at the new Prophet's fame
And fill'd with hope, he sought Him out by night,
And held long speech with Him, of deep concern,
As to Messiah's Kingdom. And to him
Spake Jesus, not as unto one He held

The Story of the Twelve

By office privileged, but He declared,
That save a man be of the Spirit born,
And not of flesh alone, he cannot e'en
Enter the Kingdom. And as none may tell
Whither or whence the wind, by sound thereof,
So telleth none the Spirit ! Then he spake
Things so amazing of the Son of Man,
As ne'er the Ruler heard ! So deeply moved
Was Nicodemus, that I scarce may doubt—
Tho' of the Sanhedrin—he will become
A follower of the Master.

NATHANAEL

It were well
That He should gain the Rulers ; for to them
The people turn for guidance e'en as sheep
Unto their shepherds. Then more speedily
The Kingdom of Messiah will draw near,
For is His cause not theirs ?

JOHN

It should be so,
And yet have we not seen how much wherein
His doctrine differeth from that long held
Of scribes and Pharisees ? Thou knowest well
Whereof I speak, Nathanael ; yet to those
Who lately came are certain things unknown,
By which were made more manifest to us
His secret mind and will. So would I tell
What happ'd one day, when in Samaria
We who were with Him first to Sychar came ;

The Kingdom

And where He bade me rest at noon with Him
By Jacob's well, while had the others gone
Unto the village. Presently there came
A woman to draw water, and she was
E'en of that race by Israel held accursed.
Yet spake He graciously, and even craved—
To her amaze and mine—that He might drink
From out her 'plenish'd pitcher ! And thereat
She said : “ Dost thou, a Jew, ask drink of me,
A woman of Samaria ? ” He replied :
“ If knewest thou, in truth, the gift of God,
And who 'tis asketh thee, thou hadst ask'd Him,
And He to thee had living water given.”
She then, embolden'd, saith : “ Whence drawest
thou ?

Forsooth the well is deep ! Art thou, indeed,
Greater than he who gave it ? ” And again
With wondrous words, and solemn, answer'd He :
“ Whoe'er this water drinks shall thirst again :
But whoso drinketh water that I give,
Shall never thirst ; but it shall be in him
A well upspringing to eternal life.”
At that she begg'd, “ Sir, give this unto me,
That I thirst not, nor come so far to draw.”
Then saith He, “ Go, thy husband hither call.”
Whereat confused, her looks and words betray'd
Such things she fain would hide. But so amazed
And awed she grew, when further He reveal'd
All things concerning her, that she exclaim'd,
“ Sir, I perceive that thou a prophet art ! ”
Then ready wit—in part to cover shame,

The Story of the Twelve

And partly curious—turn'd her to ask
The question ever rankling sore between
Samaritan and Jew ; and thereupon,
As one most deeply moved, He said to her :
“ Woman, believe me that the hour comes,
When neither here nor in Jerusalem
The Father shall be worshipp'd. Even now
Is come the hour when such the Father seeks
Who worship Him in spirit and in truth :
For God is Spirit.” Yet unto the last
He kept His greatest word : for when she saith,
Perplex'd, “ I know that when Messiah comes,
Which is call'd Christ, He will declare all things ”—
He answer made with wondrous majesty :
“ I that speak unto thee am even He ! ”

JUDAS ISCARIOT

'Twas passing strange to speak such things as these
Unto a woman—a Samaritan !
Nay, it were well this come not to the ears
Of any of the Rulers ; or 'twould add
But fuel to suspicion, which, as fire
Once fann'd to flame, doth ever prove itself
Hard to be quenched.

JOHN

Tho' 'twas strange to us,
It seem'd not so to Him. And when the rest,
Returning, saw with whom He spake, their lips
Were dumb for very wonder. Yet I vow
That as I listen'd I forgot that she

The Kingdom

Was a Samaritan, and heard alone
Such words of gracious, yet compelling power
As held my heart enthrall'd. And even so
Was I constrain'd anew when listing Him
This day upon the mount.

PHILIP

We shall have need
Of patience as thou sayest, verily,
O son of Zebedee ; yet doth my heart
Persuade me as thine own. When unto Him
I brought thee first, Nathanael, then also
How swiftly were thy passing doubts dispersed
Before the Nazarene. Art thou not one
Known to be mighty in the ancient word
Of Moses and the Prophets ? Dost thou still
Believe Him the Messiah ?

NATHANAEL

Still my heart
In Him rejoices, as on that great day
When first I saw His face ! And tho' in much
He differeth from expectations form'd
Concerning the Messiah, yet He knows
The Scriptures with such knowledge as may none
In Israel claim to hold ! So hath confess'd
E'en Nicodemus, since that night he held
Long converse with Him ; and of these deep things
Well may the Ruler judge. Ah, surely ne'er
Came heavenly wisdom, mingled with such grace
Of human sympathy, as breathed in all

The Story of the Twelve

He spake to us this day ! My soul foretells
He pledged that glorious vision, not in vain,
When I confess'd Him first.

THOMAS

And I also
Was drawn to Him by that same graciousness
Whereof Nathanael speaks. For when I heard
Of the young Rabbi's learning, straight I sought
To question Him of all my doubts and fears,
As I had others sought. Tho' He excell'd
Them all in deepest wisdom, 'twas in Him
Such charity and patience rare, which won
My anxious confidence. Doth there not hang
So dark a cloud o'er Israel in these days,
That none may tell 'twixt these our rival schools
And the new lore of Alexandria—
Where doth true knowledge dwell ? I heard this day
The Nazarene with wonder ; for He spake
Familiar things, yet unfamiliarly,
And with a spirit of authority
As vesteth not our teachers. Yet 'tis well
We wait with patience, ere we may adjudge
How far in power He will exceed such things
As have been claim'd by others.

JAMES

Dost thou doubt
That He hath wrought such marvels, as before
Were never seen of men ? Or that His words
Are wise beyond all others ?

The Kingdom

THOMAS

Nay, in sooth,
I speak for mine own self. And He doth seem
So worthy of the highest I may give,
That I would stake my all of human hope
Upon the venture : and for His own sake—
E'en more than mine—lest I should find Him less,
Must prove Him more than others ! For if not,
The hazard of His cause were rash, indeed,
With followers so few, and all unused
To such vast issues ! But I am constrain'd
To cast my lot therein, for good or ill,
And would the rather doubt my mind's own doubt
Than foil my heart's consent.

MATTHEW

If any here
Have need to speak His praise,—the more have I
Who was but late an outcast of my race ;
Yea, twice accursed, since I of Levi's tribe
Became a publican and gather'd tax
In Herod's tetrarchy ! Then did I hear
Of this new Rabbi, who spake graciously
Even to publicans, and unto all
Whom Pharisees despised. Hope sprang within,
And seeking Him I ask'd, if such as I,
Class'd by the law with sinners, and unclean,
Were alien from Israel ? Judge ye then,
What joy was mine, when from the seat of toll
He bade me straight arise and follow Him.
Then longing that e'en others of my class

The Story of the Twelve

Might win His favour, I prepared a feast
To honour Him, at which were some of ye,
But most were publicans, and such as shared
The lot I long had borne. There in our midst
He sat all unashamed, yea, as a friend
Among His friends. Yet so He hallow'd it
By presence and by speech, till seem'd the feast
A very Passover ! And when the scribes
Rebuked Him sore that thus He sat at meat,
Ye mind His wondrous words :—" They that are
whole

Need no physician, but the sick alone ;
For I came not to call the righteous forth,
But sinners to repentance." Some there were
Who aye with scorn had met that scornful word
From lips of Pharisees ; then first deep felt
Its truth, self-shamed, when from His lips it came
With love and pity blent !

Thus of ye all
I am His greatest debtor, and can ne'er
Repay the debt I owe. It hath been said
I am of clerkly habit. If, indeed,
The skill which once I used as publican,
The Master deemeth worthy ; unto Him
Henceforth it shall be dedicate alone.

JAMES (*the son of Alphæus*)

I know not if ye aught expect to hear
From one who, all unknown, yet finds a place
Within your company. My words are few,
Yet would I speak them ; for, with Thaddæus

The Kingdom

Did I attend the feast which Matthew gave
Unto the Master. Never had we heard
A Rabbi from whose heart sweet love did flow,
Divinely as e'en wisdom, from His lips !
Enthrall'd, we begg'd to aid the cause of Him
Whom we believe Messiah ! Yet, methinks,
We have been overbold ; for small must be
Such aid as we can render. But, bechance,
Will there be lowly ways in which to serve
E'en One so great as He !

JUDAS THADDÆUS

Yea, for tho' great
In very truth, yet is He gracious too,
And full of all most gentle courtesy
As 'twill be joy to serve.

SIMON PETER

Lest any here
Misjudge of aught I spake, I fain would add,
That while He needeth all, it is for each
To win within the Kingdom that due place
His zeal requiteth him. And ye shall find—
Despite my spoken fears and wonderment—
Nor slack my feet, nor cold shall prove my heart
In following the Master !

JOHN

We shall learn
More doubtless speedily of His own will
As it concerneth each. And until then,
Let further speech await.

BOOK III

DISILLUSIONMENT

SCENE.—*At Capernaum, in the house of Simon Peter.*

TIME.—*After the discourse of Jesus concerning Himself as the Bread of Life, on the day following that on which the miraculous feeding of the Five Thousand had taken place near Bethsaida Julias.*

PRESENT.—*The Twelve Disciples.*

SIMON PETER

Brethren, 'tis well that we should counsel take
Of these great happenings ; for sore I fear
Such issues follow, as do rather bode
For ill than good. Swiftly as oft hath spread
The storm cloud o'er the radiance of high noon,
So now have shadows threaten'd with eclipse
The zenith of our hopes.—For know we not
The saying of the Rabbis—that whene'er
Messiah came, He would again perform
The miracle of Moses and would feed
The multitude with bread ? Lo, even so
Did we behold this very marvel wrought
Above Bethsaida Julias yesterday !
For from the Master's hands dealt we not forth

Disillusionment

To that vast throng the bread and fish He bless'd,
And multiplied from but such scanty store
As a lad's basket held ? Small wonder, then,
The people rose and urged Him there proclaim
Himself Messiah-King : the while we stood
In awed expectancy that now at last
Had the great moment come ! Yet by no sign
He further testified. Nay, but we mark'd
How stern His voice and look, as, turning swift,
He bade us cross the lake while He dispersed
The clamorous multitude. Then yet again—
As if He fear'd lest in resentment sore
At our dismissal we, perchance, should doubt
Of that we had beheld—lo, suddenly
We saw Him drawing near, with easeful tread
Walking the boisterous wave whereon we toss'd
Benighted and storm-driven ! Yet when to-day
Many return'd again and sought of Him
Some further sign, that so they might believe,
He answer'd with no sign, but words alone—
Most wonderful 'tis true, yet hard to hear—
Concerning bread from Heaven, which He bestow'd
As could not Moses give ! And then ye know
That at such sayings were loud murmurs heard,
And many following us were so dismay'd,
That straightway they withdrew.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

And wond'rest thou ?

Since He spake awful words, as one who gave
His flesh and blood for very meat and drink,

The Story of the Twelve

Whereof must all partake, that they might have
His life abiding in them ! Nay, forsooth,
What wonder, if some charged it blasphemy,
And others went forth sadly on their way,
With consternation fill'd ?

SIMON PETER

Yet such as these
Might well desert Him, who, or soon or late,
Would find excuse. But ne'er can I forget
The wistful sadness of the face He turn'd
Upon ourselves, when from the synagogue
We came perplex'd, and falteringly He ask'd :
“ Go ye also away ? ”

ANDREW

Yea, and thereto
Thou answerdst alone ; while we were dumb
With fearful hopes, which dared not such bold speech,
As yet we bless'd thee for :—“ Lord, unto whom
Shall we now go ? Thou only hast the words
Of life eternal. And we have believed,
And know Thou art the Holy One of God ! ”

SIMON PETER

In truth, I named Him so, nor would withdraw
That word which, urgent, sprang upon my lips,
As to my heart sprang love in quick response
To such appeal as His ! Now dangers threat
And priestly craft hath turn'd the fickle herd
Against Him with suspicion :—Did He think

Disillusionment

That I, who ne'er forsook a friend in need,
Would play the coward's part ? No power have we
Save such as He supplieth ; as was seen
When He permitted us to work great signs
Of late in Galilee ! If we would share
His fuller favours, we must needs await
The time He deems auspicious.

SIMON ZELOTES

Of a truth :
Yet were it ill if He too long should wait !
'Tis well to wait until that moment come,
Which waiting maketh sure ; but I am fear'd
Lest that great moment come—and pass away—
Which, passing, ne'er returns. For while He works
With slow and patient hope to His own end,—
Nor idle are His foes ! And verily,
It meaneth much when now the Pharisees
Make common cause with the Herodians !
Yea, e'en Levitic zeal forgets its hate
Of those who favour Herod ; and allied,
Stand both against Him in unholy league,
Altho' each fears His power. So gathering clouds,
Like birds of evil omen, hover near
With presage of disaster ! And 'tis said,
That since the bloody tyrant, Antipas,
Beheaded John, he broodeth on the fame
Of this new Prophet, fearful lest in Him
The Baptist lives again ! Who then can tell
Unto what desperate course his frenzied dread
May urge his guilty conscience ?

The Story of the Twelve

Ah, my heart

Is sore perplex'd at this great mystery
Concerning John. For tho' the Master praised
His zeal and faithfulness, yet sought He not
By word or deed to save him, who alone
For His own sake, laid down his very life !
But well assured I am that Herod yet
Shall drain his o'er-full cup of wickedness
E'en to the bitter dregs. Yea, many counts
Have we to settle with our Roman lords ;
And clamorous they grow, since Pilate slew
The Galilæan pilgrims at the feast,
With legions from Antonia—and, most foul !
Mingled their blood with their own sacrifice
While in the Temple courts. But of these things
The Master speaketh calmly ; yet, may be,
His judgment when it falleth shall be found
The heavier for the waiting. Verily,
Methought that judgment nigh, as thought we all,
When yesterday the people would have seized
And crown'd Him King-Messiah ! By my troth,
A single word from Him ! and I had led
A thousand men from yon hillside to raise
The standard of revolt 'gainst Cæsar's self.
Yet sped that moment without word or sign,
Save such as show'd Him anxious to allay
The fervour He had roused. 'Twas on my lips
To urge Him seize the chance ! but there was
that
So sternly sad in the rebuking glance
He flash'd upon me, that I felt as one

Disillusionment

Ashamed of mine own thoughts, and, with ye all,
Departed at His bidding. So be it :
I have spoken. But if I dare to judge
Of this or that He doeth, well I know
There is in Him some spirit which doth hold
My soul within its spell, as never yet
Was body held of bonds.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

Thy speech is bold,
As doth become a Zealot ; and in much
My thoughts accord with thine. I also am
Direct of speech and purpose, nor pretend
Such knowledge of the Master's mind and will,
As some are favour'd with. But unto me
It seemeth that the cause we felt assured
Of full and speedy triumph, now but drags
On its bewilder'd way. Great destinies
Must needs be greatly dared ; and there doth come
A fateful moment which foreshadoweth
Or failure, or success ! How have we seen
That, save alone in power, He hath disproved
All we had thought to find in the Messiah.—
A Priesthood waiting ready to His hands !—
Yet made He enemies, and not allies
Of those who best had served Him. Are they not
A class apart, who nurse the nation's hopes
With patriot zeal ; and what then matters it,
In very truth, if they have even strain'd
A little here or loosed a little there,
In this or that of doctrine ?

The Story of the Twelve

Yet for them
He showeth scant regard. Nay, from the first,
I sought to wean Him from so rash a course
As He had ventured on, ere I became
One of your company,—but all in vain.
And 'twixt Him and the Rulers hath the rift
Grown ever wider since that Sabbath day
He bade the paralytic, whom He heal'd,
Bear pallet from Bethesda ! When again
Some of ye pass'd with Him thro' ripening corn,
Whereof ye pluck'd and ate, and ye were charged :
He brook'd no blame, but straight declared Him-
self

Greater than law and Temple ; yea, as One,
Lord even of the Sabbath !

Nor 'tis meet,
So oft more readily bestows He praise
On aliens of our race, and proselytes,
Than on true Israel's seed ! Sufficed it not,
That Priscus, the Centurion, should receive
The healing craved for his unworthy slave ?—
But it must needs be blazed that greater faith
Was ne'er in Israel found ! And I had thought
When proud Jäirus begg'd the Master save
His dying child, He would have made all haste
To answer such a summons ! Yet He stay'd
To cheer each sorry wretch who throng'd His path,
With word or healing ; and such parley held
With one, a woman, who e'en clutch'd His robe
And found her plague assuaged,—that news arrived
Of the sick maiden's death !

Disillusionment

ANDREW

Yet wrought He not
Even a greater marvel, who restored
The dead to life—than had He only saved
The stricken maid from death ?

JUDAS ISCARIOT

'Tis true, at last
Her life He did restore, as was beheld
Of but the favour'd three ! Yet He had turn'd
Such opportunity to better count
Had He first acted with more due respect
To rank and circumstance. And so again,
Ye mind when Simon, the rich Pharisee,
Would have us eat with Him, a woman came,
Even a courtesan, who stole within,
And, ere we knew, brake alabaster box
Of spikenard on His feet,—and with her hair,
All fall'n in wild disorder, then did wipe,
As, kissing them, she wept ! And as ye know,
When Simon spake his thoughts, lo, Jesus then
Loud praised her deed, and, with amazing words,
Held hers a worthier offering than was all
The Pharisee had render'd ! Sooth to say,
When at the last He bade her go in peace,
And e'en declared, " Thy sins are now forgiven,"
Seem'd none to be so righteous there—as she !
And none as Simon—sinful ! Who may tell
What rumours will arise from such events ?
And, truly, there were meaning looks exchanged
Between the watchful scribes : not to say aught

The Story of the Twelve

Of lavish waste, which surely had been turn'd
To needier account ! But of such things
He seemeth strangely reckless, as was learnt
Unto their cost, by them of Gadara,
Whose swine He let yon outcast spirits drive
Headlong into the lake ! for 'tis, in sooth,
A goodly trade.

Now would I freely speak
My mind to ye as brethren, since these things
Concern my office as custodian
Of this our common fund. Seem'd it not strange
He bound us with such scruples, whom He sent
By twain on His commission, e'en as if
We rather went as suppliants, than as those
Who herald a Messiah ? Thus I saw
Full many a chance was lost, that had been nursed
By worldly prudence, unto good account.
Then did it happen once that, for His sake,
I took the matter into mine own hands—
When Shammah, the rich Pharisee, besought
Me heal his cripple son, and offer made
Of fifty silver shekels ! Such a sum
Methought had well replenish'd our scant store,
At mercy's cost alone ; and I forthwith,
In pity for the lad, did seek his cure.
I know not how or why, but power had gone,
When I essay'd to use it, and in vain
Was all I said and did. Yet when at length,
In my despair, I sought the Zealot's aid,
Who journey'd with me,—at his hands was wrought
The sign to me denied ! But, of a truth,

Disillusionment

I thought to benefit His cause alone.
His cause ! ay, what of it, if 'twill not brook
The common worldly wisdom of the mart,
Nor the traditions of the synagogue ?
'Tis clear enough since that great moment pass'd
On yonder hillside, that the multitude
Grow doubtful of His purpose, and are chill'd
When wonders only end in mystic words
Which none may understand. And fain I would
He spake less of the Kingdom as He doth,
And more of His own might as King thereof,
And of His coming reign ! For if He be
Messiah truly, why doth He refrain
From loud proclaiming it ?

I counsel, then,
That, having reach'd such dangerous pass as this,
The cause demands that He be urged forthwith
Unto some bolder action ! For unless
He soon shall dare to challenge Cæsar's power,
Himself is like to fall 'twixt rival plots
Of Sanhedrin and Forum. Therefore, sirs,
Take heed unto my words ; for well I know
How jealously the Roman State doth guard
Its haughty dominance, and Sanhedrin—
Its rulership in Israel !

JAMES

I pledge thee,
Judas, thy words shall not be soon forgot—
Howe'er we judge thy counsel !—tho' in much,
That doth alone concern the Master's will,

The Story of the Twelve

We are perplex'd as thou. I also thought
That yesterday our long awaited hopes
Were nigh fulfilment, and was sore amazed
When nothing came of it. But I confess,
Scarce less I marvell'd, when the Master sent
John's heralds back to bid him patiently
Abide his bonds ; altho' I felt assured
He would release him later. Then 'twas told,
The Baptist had been slain by Antipas,
To please a Jezebel ! Alas ! no sign
Made Jesus to avert that bloody deed,
Nor hath He yet avenged it. Yet, in truth,
Our grief was naught to His, when we withdrew
Unto Bethsaida's calm, and mourn'd to think
How that great spirit died ! Nay, but such grief
Shamed our reproachful hearts ; until we knew,
Some mystery, all blameless unto Him,
Lay there beyond our ken. And Judas, mark !—
'Tis this assurance that in Jesus dwell
Unfathom'd deeps of goodness and of truth,
Which turns the edge of judgment, till alone
It woundeth him who judges ! So it was,
Despite our sham'd thoughts, when suffer'd He
The woman to anoint His feet with nard
At Simon's feast, and, all unshamed, her love
Abash'd our shame of it ! He will have need
Of purity enough himself, in sooth,
Who would so judge the Master ! As for thee,
Judas—I tell thee this unto thy face—
That I had scorn'd the baseness which could think
To barter such great powers as were our trust,

Disillusionment

For sake of worldly pelf ! I pray of thee—
As bearer of the bag—thou fill it not
With shekels which may leave their poison'd taint
Upon the food they buy ! And if, as seems,
Thou knowest more than we of secret plots
Against the Master !—Why, then be it so.
But as for me, it is enough to wait
Till, as Messiah truly, shall He rise,
And scatter forth His enemies like chaff
Before His winnowing wrath !

JOHN

It doth behove
That, at such times as these, we freely speak
The thoughts within us, since our troth is pledged
Unto one Lord and Master ; for alike
We are perplex'd at His strange tardiness
To claim Messiah's name. But, verily,
To find offence in all His graciousness,
His pity for the outcast and despised,
Is to confess a spirit alien
To all we know of Him ! And of those things
Beyond our judgment, ever turns my heart
Approvingly to Him—against myself.
Judas, couldst thou find naught at Simon's feast
But so to censure with thy righteous scorn,
One in whom love o'ercame her trembling shame ?
Thou fearest Simon's thoughts ! I pray thee fear
Rather thine own ; for, of a truth, I know
So was he wrought upon, that afterwards
He sought the suppliant out, and on himself

The Story of the Twelve

Hath taken now her care. Could any look
On such a scene as that and not be awed
Before a love which seeks the deepest need,
For its Divinest favour ? It doth grow
Daily upon me, that there yet lie hid
Meanings more spiritual than e'er we thought
In His Messiahship.

PHILIP

Yea, 'tis forgot,
That Israel's Prophets told of such an One
Whose word should be glad tidings to the poor ;
And who, with mercy infinite, should bring
Healing for every woe !

JOHN

Yet when He read
Isaiah's words in Nazareth synagogue,
Claiming that He fulfill'd them, some arose
And cast Him out in wrath. 'Tis true that now
His cause seems overshadow'd ; and we dread
What cometh next, since the great Baptist died !
Oh, but my heart was wrung with sore dismay
When first we heard it : and resentfully
We marvell'd that the Master had not wrought
A miracle to save him. I have dwelt
Full oft upon it, and alone can rest
In confidence which His own words inspired,
When John sent unto Him. Now seemeth it
As if e'en then He knew, and would prepare
Our hearts for these misgivings, by some power
Which far beyond our hopes and fears doth work,

Disillusionment

And is His awful secret ! And 'tis told,
John rested in that word ; and from his lips
No further doubt came forth : but a great calm
Fell on him, and he faced the end as one,
All lion-hearted, answers to the call
Of some high challenge !

And by that same word,
Now would I ask myself—and, Judas, thee—
If stumbling or offence have come to us
Concerning this our Master ? Doth the bond
Of poverty now gall—that thou shouldst speak
Of that which thou hast left ? And couldst thou
think,

Judas, for sordid ends, to pledge the means
He bade us consecrate to holy use ?
Thy failure but confirms alike to each,
His own experience. For unto me
Was it as unto others,—and I found
Such awful gifts did surely wax or wane
Within my hands—as in my heart there burn'd,
Or high or low, the sense of faith and love
Toward the Master felt ! If pride should tempt
To boastful using, or regard be shown
To outward circumstance,—then, lo, the power
Waned feeble as a lamp from which the oil
Had wasted ; till by warning was I driven
To crave again His spirit ! Take thou heed,
Judas, I bid thee as I bid myself,
Lest in offence of such an One, we shame
The sacred trust He gave. It is enough
That He is with us ; and, whate'er thou know'st

The Story of the Twelve

Of dangers hid from us—He knoweth more.
And soon or late will chide our faithless fears
Surely to rest again.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

My well-meant words
Ye seem to take but ill. Perchance it is
That I, less favour'd with His confidence,
Have the less grounds for mine. Yet if in aught
I tend advice, from skill'd experience
In weighty matters, 'tis alone to save
The Master from Himself. Ere it take form,
The Prophet's vision oft needs defter hands,
And wont to rougher usage than his own.
E'en so the potter's must enmix with clay,—
Else were no vessels made ! There are, in sooth,
More cleanly crafts than shows the potter's wheel :
Yet none concerns him how the pitcher comes,
Whereat he slakes his thirst in noontide heat !
Whence cometh then our Kingdom and its gain ;
If we o'er-scruple to ensoil our hands
With means that quicken it ?

While He beholds
Its heavenly visions !—I but seek to mould
Their form in earthly clay, as swiftly turns
The wheel of destiny. And if with Him
Ye are content to dream, I needs must serve
His cause in mine own way, while yet some chance
Lies in the reach of hope.

[Judas Iscariot here leaves the company.]

Disillusionment

MATTHEW

Ere Judas went,
'Twas on my lips to speak ; but now, in truth,
I **am** the less inclined. Yet 'tis more meet
In brethren to speak freely, than to nurse
Such silence as may fester to distrust
And mutual jealousy. As God doth know :
I may boast naught, who was a publican !
Yet scarce can I conceive how one should seek
For greed or gain thro' such supernal power
As late the Master lent us ; and would ask
If thou, Zelotes, canst confirm the truth
Of that which Judas tells ?

SIMON ZELOTES

I am but loth
To speak another's fault. Yet Judas now
Hath blazon'd it himself, and since ye ask,
I may not well deny that so it happ'd
Even as ye have heard ; when thus he sought
To heal the child of Shammah.

NATHANAEL

Didst thou mark
In Judas aught before this wrong befell,
To waken thy suspicion ?

SIMON ZELOTES

I had found,
Ere this, the mind of Judas prone to dwell
Upon the chance of gain, and I recall'd

The Story of the Twelve

Our vows of poverty, and how great trust
The Master show'd. Yet oft he work'd apart,
And oft return'd with querulous complaint
Of ill-success ; or grudged such priceless boons
Bestow'd on common folk. And when this happ'd
'Twas part the shekels, and in part disgrace
At the exposure fear'd at Shammah's hands—
That urged him seek my aid. Then did it seem
That from me also had all power gone forth ;
For long I strove in vain to cure the child,
And to despair was driven ! Nay, it was not
Till I begg'd Judas leave me unto prayer
And secret intercession that, at last,
Came healing virtue back. Then I restored
The child, with straighten'd limbs aleap for joy,
Into his father's arms !

PHILIP

Was further said
By Shammah, of the shekels ?

SIMON ZELOTES

Yea, in full
He press'd them on me. But I bade him know
That none might buy such power, since none might
sell
That which was God's alone ! Yet judge ye not
Of Judas over-harshly. There are faults
Which spring hot-blooded from too ardent will,
That yet hath root in good ! He thought, per-
chance,

Disillusionment

To glorify the Master and His cause ;
Tho' ill he reck'd the means. I pray ye keep
These things concerning Judas from the ears
Of our loved Master, for 'twould grieve Him sore.

THOMAS

Zelotes, thou art chary, as we know,
To speak another's ill ; and hast not told
Maybe, all that thou couldst. Our course, indeed
We steer but blindly mid these gathering mists,
Which deepen day by day. And if so be,
Hereafter that we fail,—it would but add
Dishonour to disaster, had we wrought
In base and sordid ways. I would accept
Ill from the Master's hands—than share such good
As Judas thinks to grasp. Doth Judas deem—
Who prateth of the potter's craft, forsooth—
That he hath deeper knowledge of these things,
Than the great Master-Potter ? Be it His,
Not ours, to judge why turneth He the wheel
Or slow or fast, and from the shapeless clay
Fashion e'en as He will !

JOHN

'Twere well that now
We speak not of this longer, and give heed
Unto the Zealot's words, that nothing come
Within the Master's hearing. Tho' I doubt
If aught be hid from Him, who seems, untold,
To know the thoughts of all ! I spake it not
Till now—for very terror at the words—

The Story of the Twelve

And fearing lest I caught them not aright ;
But after Peter pledged our troth to Him,
Methought I heard the Master whisper low
As if unto Himself : “ Chose I not twelve ?
And one is e'en a devil.” Yet, mayhap,
Was I mistaken, or if so He spake,
'Twas of some wayward spirit which at times
Besetteth all ; and not alone of one
Bedriven of fell malice. God forbid
Such curse on any fall !

SIMON PETER

Let come what may,
He yet shall find us ready !

ANDREW

We may leave
The morrow in His hands ; for He asks naught
Of danger or adversity from us,
Save such as He hath gauged, and is prepared
To share alike with all.

PHILIP

It seemeth so.
Swift may the future prove how vain our fears—
How timorous our hopes !

BOOK IV

THE MOUNT OF VISION

SCENE.—*At Cæsarea Philippi.*

TIME.—*The day following that on which the Transfiguration of Jesus had taken place on Mount Hermon.*

PRESENT.—*Simon Peter, James and John.*

SIMON PETER

Still on me lies the spell, and scarce I know
If I am waken'd yet ; so like a dream
Seemeth that wondrous vision of the night
On yonder mount ! Or was it but a dream
That we were there—we three alone of all,
With our loved Master ?

JAMES

Thou dost surely mind,
How yestereve He bade us leave the rest
And seek alone with Him the solitude
And calm of Hermon. But ere we had reach'd
The higher pass He sought—for it was far—
We wearied, and it shames me now to think
How brief had been our silent watch with Him,
When slumber seal'd our eyes.

The Story of the Twelve

SIMON PETER

Ay, now I mind
He pray'd awhile with us, as ne'er before,
In wistful tenderness ! Then bade us cast
Our cloaks around us, and lie down to sleep.
I naught remember'd more—save that I dreamt
We sail'd upon the lake, as on that night
He bade us cross without Him ; and the wind
Rose suddenly, and furious grew the storm.
'Twas the fourth watch again, and lo, we saw
To our amaze a form amidst the gleam
Of flying foam and drifting sheen of moon !
And cried out in our terror. Then there came
The Master's voice : “ 'Tis I, be not afraid.”
And at my reckless wish—He bade me walk
Upon the waves to Him ! . . .

Last night again
I lived that moment o'er ; when 'neath my feet
The trembling waters oped, and in their depths
I felt myself engulf'd,—for in my dream,
Was no assuring hand outstretch'd to save !
Then suddenly I woke, as at a touch,
And heard a voice affrighted, whispering near,
“ Lo, Simon, lo, behold !—what shineth there ? ”

JOHN

'Twas I that touch'd thee, Simon. Long I watch'd
The Master, after both of ye did sleep ;
For ne'er had I beheld so strange a look
Upon His face before ! Then He withdrew
Further apart from us, as with desire

The Mount of Vision

To pray alone, unwatch'd,—and so at last
I too lay down and slept. But ere they closed,
It seem'd unto mine eyes as if the moon
Shone with unwonted splendour ; and the stars
Hung low and yearningly toward the earth.
Then did I also dream.—And 'twas as if
We further climb'd to Hermon's loftiest peak
Where my last gaze had rested ; and the snow
In dazzling whiteness wreathed into strange shapes,
Unearthly bright, and hard to look upon.
The lustre wrapp'd me round in such a blaze
Of living light as would my eyelids pierce,
And I awoke bewilder'd ! Then with awe
Did I behold the Master still in prayer,
But round Him shone a glory, bright as that
My dream reveal'd,—and as of one in trance,
His face, uplifted, glow'd as doth the sun !
Fearful, I watch'd, scarce breathing. Then two forms
Slow shaped themselves from out the glistening white ;
And I heard voices, sweet as distant harps
Whose music speaks of comfort and of hope !
'Twas then I waken'd ye, for I no more
Could dare to watch alone th' unearthly scene,
As one unlawfully.

SIMON PETER

Yet e'en so real
To my bedazzled eyes—where thou didst point—
My dream such semblance to the vision gave,
That still as if on foamy crested waves
The Master nearer drew ! And so remain'd

The Story of the Twelve

My dreamful terror that He meant not now
To save me—that again I cried, “ Lord, save ! ”
Then didst thou hush me : and returning sense
Brought to my gaze the forms of other twain,
And to mine ears the sound of whisper’d words.
Yet am I well assured that there was borne,
From out their gentle breathing, speech of those
Who sought to comfort one in earthly woe
With heavenly benediction ! And did one
Speak of an empty tomb ’neath Nebo’s mount ;
And one of flame-wing’d triumph of ascent !
Then it flash’d on me that the wondrous forms
Communing with the Master, could be none
Save but the spirits glorified, indeed,
Of Moses and Elias ! At the thought
Of such angelic visitants, there came
Some longing vain, which, on my trembling lips,
Leap’d to distracted utterance ere I knew !

JAMES

Yea, Simon, thou wert ever first to speak.
Yet, I confess, thou gavest words not less
To mine own thoughts than thine. For as I look’d
And listen’d with thee, suddenly it seem’d
As if the twain had heard some distant call,
And made—reluctantly methought—to go
And leave alone the Master ! Then thy cry
Pierced, yet relieved the wonder-laden night ;
“ O Master, it is good that here we bide
And build three tabernacles—one for Thee,
And one for Moses, and Elias, one ! ”

The Mount of Vision

For thou, as I, didst fear, from His rapt look,
Lest He should leave us and return with them
Whither they came ! Yet scarce thy cry rang back
From the near startled heights, than speedily
The vision faded from before our eyes,
And, from the luminous cloud o'ershadowing us,
A voice of awful majesty proclaim'd :
“ This is my Son belovèd. Hear ye Him.”
Awestruck we fell upon the trembling earth
And hid our face before it ! Then ye mind,
A hand was laid on us, and we heard speech
Most tenderly familiar—O blest words !—
“ Arise, be not afraid.” And when we dare
Uplift our eyes, behold, to our amaze
The Master stood alone !

JOHN

Ah, strange it was,
Yet joyous, to behold all things again
As we had known them ! How each sight and sound
Of the sweet earth struck on our quicken'd sense—
The waking song of bird, the fresh-stirr'd breeze
Driving the misty vapours, till we caught
The crimson'd flush on Hermon's snow-capp'd
heights,
Glad herald of the dawn !

But still our eyes
Ever return'd unto the Master's face :
For yet thereon linger'd a light, serene
And beatific, as of One whose soul
Had look'd on things supernal, and had found

The Story of the Twelve

Such mystic peace therein, as may be won
Alone by inward travail.

SIMON PETER

Scarcely yet

Can I recall my words—such mazèd thoughts,
My senses overwrought. But one great fear
Still haunts me now, as then : that e'en somehow
That wondrous scene hath bearing on those things
He dwelleth much upon—some purpose, vast,
And sadly ominous. Can it have aught,
Think ye, to do with words He lately spake
I could not but rebuke—so dread they were—
Of suffering and woe, yea, e'en of death,
From the Chief Priests and elders ? Mind ye then
How fiercely turn'd He on me, whom awhile
He so had honour'd when I answer'd Him
At Philip Cæsarea :—" Thou art the Christ :
Son of the living God ! "

But if He be

Messiah truly, why doth He foretell
Such things as fill our hearts with woeful fear ?
And wherefore Moses and Elias thus
Upon the mount with Him ?—unless, indeed,
As Rabbis have foretold, it were the sign
Of the Messiah's reign ! And yet how soon
The glory faded, wherein we had seen
Him so transfigured, and as we return'd,
He spake e'en yet again as one whose heart
Foreboded future ill. For charged He not,
" Tell no man of the vision, till that day

The Mount of Vision

The Son of Man be risen from the dead " ?
I knew not what He meant—nor dare I ask.
But didst thou not, O son of Zebedee,
Speak much with Him as we together came
Down from the mountain ? Unto thee, perchance,
He hath told more. If so, what thinkest thou
Concerning this great marvel ?

JOHN

Unto me

Was nothing further told of secrets hid
Within the Master's mind, than He hath deem'd
Expedient to reveal to all alike.
Nay, Simon, if in aught I seem to share
A deeper knowledge, it hath been inspired
Oft by thy readier wit. It seemeth me,
This Hermon vision beareth much, in truth,
Upon that great confession thou didst make
At Philip Cæsarea. For ne'er before
Had we seen Him so moved with conscious joy,
As when thy lips confess'd, " Thou art the Christ ! "
And ne'er with sterner ire when thou didst chide
His self-foreboding woe, which wrung our hearts
With such protesting sorrow ! And, tho' none
May fully tell such sign as ne'er till now
Was seen of mortal eyes, yet, may it be,
Some glimmering of light is shed thereon
By things already known. Did He not say,
But lately, there were some of us, indeed,
Who should not taste of death till we had seen
The Son of Man come forth in power to reign

The Story of the Twelve

Amid angelic glory ! Think ye not,
That unto us His promise was fulfill'd,
When we beheld those spirits twain who shared
In His transfiguration ? For who else
Could they but Moses and Elias be ?—
Since 'tis well known that, of bless'd Israel's sons,
These herald the Messiah ! Swiftly thus
By heavenly wonder was thy word confirm'd,
Simon Bar-Jona, that He is " The Christ " !
And, by yet further sign, was He not crown'd
As with a glory far exceeding theirs ?
For even as thou utter'dst thy wish
To build three tabernacles, one for each,
How swift the jealous clouds enwrapp'd the twain
From our divided gaze, and, with rebuke,
Sounded the voice, as bidding us alone
Yield homage unto Him !

JAMES

But wherefore, then,
Do these vague shadowings of fear surcharge
His words with mournfulness ; for, of a truth,
Is not the Christ—Messiah ? Yet behold,
He claimeth not that word ; but calls Himself
Alone—" The Son of Man " ! And when at last
We ask'd what " rising from the dead " should
mean—

Since say the scribes, " Elias first must come "—
He said, " Elias is already come,
But yet they knew him not ; and even as
He suffer'd, so likewise the Son of Man

The Mount of Vision

Shall suffer of them." Spake He not these words
Concerning John the Baptist ?

SIMON PETER

Doth He speak

Then of Himself, as thus—the " Son of Man " ?
Or of another who hath yet to come,
And suffer as did John ? By some 'tis said
That two Messiahs will appear on earth—
One who shall wield the sword with mighty power,
And first deliver Israel ; then shall come
One after Him, beneath whose peaceful sway
Our tribes united will a Kingdom make,
Ruling o'er all the world. But did not John
Proclaim Him only as the Coming One,
Nor spake of any other ? Nor did He
Himself deny, when I confess'd Him " Christ " !
The Christ, and suffering !—what words are these
To link in common use ! To " rise again "
Foretells of death ! Can, then, Messiah die ?

JOHN

Yet 'twas that questioning doubt which drew on
thee,
Simon, more stern rebuke than e'er we heard
Fall from His gentle lips ! And now, alas,
My heart with contradictions is perplex'd
And fill'd with wondering fear. For who may doubt
He is the very Christ, while scarcely yet
The heavenly glory from our eyes hath pass'd
Of His Apocalypse !

The Story of the Twelve

Whate'er may hap,
That vision of the mount will aye abide
Enshrined within our hearts, all-secretly,
For so He pledged us—"Till the Son of Man
Be risen from the dead." Oh, direst words!—
Would I could count them but the phantasy
Of a disorder'd dream. Yet that were vain—
Or else were also vain all that, beside,
In such entrancèd glory oped for us
The very gate of Heaven! Nay, it must be
Rather that by such words He conjureth
Delusive fears, which, to a mind o'erwrought
With such great purposes, do oft arise.
Henceforth let it be ours to prove them so,
And, in our deepen'd loyalty, win back
His thoughts to fitter mood.

SIMON PETER

Yea, for such words
But mock the will of One who wieldeth power
O'er chance and change, o'er life and circumstance!
And even if in aught were ground for fear—
As He imagineth—are we not now
Doubly forewarn'd thereof? Hath He not said
'Tis in Jerusalem that danger lurks
And fancied plots await Him? Then 'tis ours
To hold His steps therefrom, and urge Him bide
In Galilee awhile, till in the South
Hostility against Him be allay'd.
Soon will the tide of favour turn again
Upon His side, and chance, but rightly seized,

The Mount of Vision

Shall bear our cause to triumph ! Who may tell
What special honours wait us by this sign
Whereof He pledges us to silence now—
When Israel's Kingdom cometh ?

JAMES

May it be
Fulfill'd for Him far otherwise than this,
Which He predicts—or else we hope in vain !
I would, almost, Simon Zelotes shared
This knowledge with us ; for, methinks, his aid
Might now avail us much. And yet, in sooth,
Doubtless he recks such fears as have been late
Oft on the Master's lips. Nay, now perchance,
'Twere well we hold this secret to ourselves ;
Since therein may be hid for us the pledge
Of greater glory—and not sought of us,
But of His choosing !

JOHN

Whatsoe'er may be
His will concerning us, yet naught that happ'd
At that great vigil must be spoken of.
And if the day should ever dawn whereon
Our lips shall be unseal'd—it well may come
With revelations that shall e'en exceed
The glory seen on Hermon ! God so grant :
Or may God so forbid !

BOOK V

THE CRISIS

SCENE.—*At Ephraim, where Jesus had retired with His Disciples, on learning of the threatening attitude of the Sanhedrin toward Him, after the raising of Lazarus at Bethany.*

TIME.—*The night of arrival.*

PRESENT.—*The Twelve Disciples.*

SIMON PETER

A hurried flight ! Thanks be 'tis safely o'er,
And here in Ephraim we can bide awhile
Until the furor cease ; or, if need be,
Make for the Jordan wilds. 'Twas as I fear'd
If once we left Peræa ; but when news came
That Lazarus was sick, in vain we begg'd
The Master pause, even at such a call,
And thither went He at the last, as one
Drawn by resistless fate ! Yet who may tell
What impulse urged Him, far beyond our power
To aid or hinder ? For had He not gone
To Bethany, then had we not beheld
The greatest miracle that e'er was wrought.
To raise the dead to life—ay, from the tomb,
Where four days he had lain—and with a word !

The Crisis

Oh, awful wonder ! Who can e'er forget
The terror of that moment, when we fear'd
Half lest He fail,—and half, He should succeed !
Then lo, in answer to His summons, rose,
Bound in his grave-clothes, Lazarus our friend !
And in hot haste, I trow, some sped them back
And told the Pharisees. Then Sanhedrin
Was straightly summon'd, and 'twas said that
One

Who wrought so great a sign would surely rouse
The public fervour, till perchance, in fear
Of fresh revolt, the Romans would despoil
The Hierarchy of power. And Caiaphas
Arose and urged it more expedient
That such an One should for the people die—
Than the whole nation perish for His sake !

SIMON ZELOTES

“ Expedient,” forsooth,—that He who comes
As Israel's great Deliverer should act
Scapegoat for him who but to servile ends
Employs his priestly power !

SIMON PETER

So it would seem.

And word of these designs came to our ears
Thro' Nicodemus—unto whom be peace—
For tho' of Sanhedrin, he favours us,
Yet secretly. 'Twas he who urged our flight,
Since now the words of Caiaphas have fann'd
To fiercest flame the Rulers' enmity

The Story of the Twelve

Against the Master. Yet now doth it seem
As if some wayward fate did ever draw
His feet unto the City ! Know we not,
How for six months He hath been torn betwixt
Fear and desire, in which Jerusalem
Hath burden'd all His thoughts ? Yea, even twice
Went He up to the feasts, and twice return'd,
Forthdriven by the rancour He aroused.
If here He bides awhile, we scarce may doubt
That, 'spite the Pharisees, His fame will spread
By Bethany's great marvel, and again
The people will acclaim Him.

SIMON ZELOTES

Yet 'tis strange,
The Master follows not His word with deed,
Nor claims full right of His Messiahship !
When thou, O Simon, didst confess Him " Christ,"
And He denied it not, He surely own'd
Himself—Messiah King ? But then such words
Of suffering and woe, yea, e'en of death,
As oft He speaketh since—are surely naught
But the o'er-scrupled phantasies of One
In whom humility runs to excess !

JUDAS ISCARIOT

Ah, there thou hast it ! Virtue, which expands
To sentiment o'er freely, may but fall
As falls a flower o'erblown, from off its stem,
Yielding its core of strength to cloying sense
Of its own sweetness.

The Crisis

SIMON ZELOTES

Nay, but deem it not,
Brethren, that I at least would question aught
Of that most gracious tenderness which draws
Our hearts unto His own. Perchance too much
We dwell upon these darksome words of His ;
For of another spirit oft He seems,
And speaks in other vein. Ye mind what time
His kinsmen press'd Him to attend the feast,
And He at first refused, but afterwards
Bade us go up with Him ? I trow, not then
His words were over-meek ; nor lack'd He aught
Of bold authority, when so the scribes
He answer'd charge for charge. And what might
mean

The Master, when he spake as One who came
Even with fire and sword—not bringing peace,
But strife on earth, and finding friends or foes
In those who should accept Him, or deny ?
Yet scarce His actions seem to bear His words :
For who should be His friends—save Israelites ?
And enemies—if not Samaritans ?
But when, of late, the sons of Zebedee
Would fain command the fire from Heaven to fall
On some of that cursed race, who drove us forth
From out their village, He rebuked their zeal
With sternest words and looks ! Even to one,
A woman of Syrophœnicia,
Did He permit Himself at last to yield
The wordy vantage snatch'd from out His lips
By her too ready wit—that e'en as dogs

The Story of the Twelve

May eat of crumbs which from the table fall,
So even Gentiles from the honour'd board
Where Israel's children sit !

ANDREW

Yet thereupon
Were we not shamed, that when at first she begg'd
The Master heal her child, we bade Him scorn
Her importunity ? And surely thou,
Simon, couldst scarce begrudge a boon so won
By faith begat of love in woman's heart—
As brook'd of no denial ?

SIMON ZELOTES

Verily,
Her faith was great, as may not be denied.
Yet mark ye that, in granting such a boon,
Did He maintain it was of right alone
Israel might claim His favours ! But, in truth,
So rich the feast, so great our heritage :—
Perhaps 'twere churlish to refuse the crumbs
Which, falling here or there, may well be craved
By Gentile suppliants ! And it may be
That such unwonted bounty testifies
The near approach of that for which we look,
And doth portend some mighty master-stroke !
Then Caiaphas shall learn 'twas but a feint
That bade our hasty flight !

JOHN

It may be so ;
Yet rest assured the Master knoweth well

The Crisis

What course He would pursue : and doth but ask
For our obedience. For I have seen
Throughout these many months—tho' we have
pass'd

From region unto region, as a ship
Is toss'd upon the sea by varying winds—
How yet some steady purpose moveth Him,
As to a destined haven. But the end
Destined, may be the end not most desired !
And now, alas, my soul doth fear to prove
What destiny it is awaiteth Him
Within Jerusalem ! But hope again
Seems sprung anew for us : and it may be,
This last great miracle at Bethany
Shall swift revive our fortune ! Yet how oft
Have we thus spoken of His wondrous works,
And marvell'd that so little He doth count
Upon their power Himself ; nay, e'en forbids
That we should loud acclaim them.

PHILIP

Yea, methinks,
He had been wiser to have wrought His deeds
Before the High Priest and the Sanhedrin !
Yet never hath He sought such witnesses ;
But work'd as chance did serve.

JOHN

And it would seem
Rather His aim to reach the heart with words,
Than court the eye with wonders. Verily,
His words are marvellous as miracles !

The Story of the Twelve

And from His lips such healing virtue flows
For heart and mind, as from His touch returns
Health to the halt and maim'd. Did we not think,
At Tabernacles feast, He would attest
His claim by some great sign?—Yet ne'er such
power

Seem'd His, as when He bade all men athirst
Drink of the living water He bestow'd!
O miracle of words!—when yet again
Declared He: "I am the light of the world."
But when He charged their boasted freedom vain,
Altho' of Abram's seed, and spake as One
Whose truth alone could free, since He Himself
Was free from sin; ay, further e'en declared,
"Ere Abram was, I am"!—with cries of rage
They rose to stone Him, but He pass'd unscathed.

NATHANAEL

Amazing words! How had He dared them forth,—
Had truth not been in them? And yet, if true,
Scarce less the daring that should utter them!
Oh, who may scale such heights as these, with Him,
Or fathom depths so deep!

JOHN

And who may think
That miracles had saved Him who thus spake;
Or satisfied the minds of those who heard?
Nay—as if He would prove it—afterwards
Did He restore the beggar, blind from birth,
Who sat without the Temple. And ye mind

The Crisis

What furor follow'd when the man declared
Such power came but from God !

For then it was

The Master told in wondrous parable,
As of a shepherd who with gentle care
Tended his sheep ; and of false hirelings
Who robb'd the fold, or fled in wild alarm
When danger threaten'd nigh. O beauteous
words !—

How, 'neath their mystic tenderness, one heard
The shepherds' far familiar call at dawn,
And answering bleat from the night-folded flock ;
Ere e'en the drowsing porter, hearing, opes,
And each doth lead his eager-following herd
Unto the daily pasture. There were some,
I trow, who listening fail'd not to perceive
Whom meant He by th' unworthy hirelings !
But when He spake as One Divinely sent,
E'en the Good Shepherd, to whom power belong'd
To give His life, yet take it up again,
For love of His own sheep—then did the scribes
Cry out, “ He hath a devil ! ” But some said,
“ Such words are spoken not by one possess'd.
Think ye a devil oped the eyes of him,
Blind from his birth ? ”

And whence, indeed, can come
This strange and wondrous power in all His words,
Save from that source whence also He derives
His power miraculous ? So do they draw
Th' accustom'd measure of the startled soul
To new and larger judgments—as the light

The Story of the Twelve

Of a new day oft new revelation brings—
Reversing to the mind what yesterday
It did accept unquestion'd ! In His hands
How have the tangled meshes of the law
Unravell'd easily, as He laid bare
The hidden springs of truth ? E'en so it was,
When from yon lawyer's lips the question fell,
" Who is my neighbour ? "—How then did He take
That word, unfolding it in the clear light
Of parable concerning one who e'en,
Tho' a Samaritan, could yet forget
The hatred 'twixt our race, when human woe
For human pity cried !

SIMON ZELOTES

Yet was it hard
To learn how large the love and mercy hid
Within our law's demands, by storied act
Of a Samaritan !

JOHN

Yea, but 'tis there
The secret in Him dwells ! Love ruleth all
In word or deed of His, nor doth man's love
To God avail with Him, unless he love
Also his fellow-man. And in such prayer
As ne'er the heart had thought to pray before,
So taught He us to pray.

At these my words,
Ye well may say, " Physician, heal thyself,"—
Since in hot zeal I call'd down fire from Heaven
On the Samaritans ! Yet, think ye not,

The Crisis

I chafe at His rebuke ; for I would fain
Suffer of mine own spirit, if thereby
I may learn more of His. But of His will,
And whereunto it leadeth—who may speak ?
Yet is it hard to link Messiah's name
Unto such woes as have been oft of late
Upon the Master's lips. For if now He
Be not Messiah—then I know Him not ;
And can but trust Him, as alone I know,
Unto the uttermost.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

'Tis well to trust,
John of Bethsaida !—But to be assured,
Methinks, were even better ! Yet, if thou,
Who hast His confidence, art so perplex'd,
How should it be with me, who am misjudged
Of my most eager service ? Well I mind
How Simon and ye sons of Zebedee
Were absent with Him, when at Cæsarea
They brought the frenzied child for us to heal.
To save our honour, I essay'd to work
The miracle myself ; but naught avail'd
Until ye, with the Master, deign'd to end
Your Hermon wanderings ! And when I ask'd
Why we could not prevail, He made reply :
“ This kind cometh not out, save but by prayer.”
Is Judas, then, not deem'd a man of prayer ?
And none of us, forsooth, saving ye three ?
Yet even ye, perchance, have grievance felt
At ill-requited service ! Hast forgot,

The Story of the Twelve

Simon Bar-Jona, with what bitter scorn
He so reproved thee, when thou didst but own
He was the very Christ ?—" Satan " ! thou wert.
'Tis a hard word—and for such words as thine !
Oft have I ponder'd it, and wonder'd much
If it recall'd like words He spake to thee
When, at Capernaum, He asked us once
If we also forsook Him—as did some.
And, Simon, thou again didst answer Him
With words of noble faith ! 'Twas then He
said :

" Did I not choose you twelve : and one of you
Is e'en a devil ? " Oft may he who speaks,
Forget his words. But there are words, which
none,

Once hearing, may forget.—A " devil," one ;
And " Satan," also ! If such words as these
Grasp each unto the other till they link
In my sure memory—'tis for thy sake,
As one ill-judged, I speak it ; nor think thou,
Of malice 'tis recall'd !

And have not all
Risk'd much to serve His cause ? At Kerioth
I left a profitable trade—as ye,
Who from Bethsaida came, your fisher-craft—
To follow the Messiah, as we thought.
Is not the labourer worthy of his hire ?
And shall not they who most at sowing toil,
Share most the spoil of harvest ? Yet He counts
Most zealous service but of lesser worth
Than humbleness as of a weakling child,

The Crisis

Or such unworldliness as men deem mad !
The rich young Ruler e'en He turn'd away—
Tho' perfect in the law—and bade him first
Sell all that he possess'd, to enrich the poor,
Ere he be counted worthy ! And He spake
Thereafter of His Kingdom such strange things
As left us sore amazed. 'Tis true that, when
Simon reminded Him we had left all
For His own sake, He promised we should sit
Upon twelve thrones—judges of Israel's tribes—
And should at last receive a hundredfold
For all we had relinquish'd ! Yet He speaks
In parables which ever tease the ear
With some half-hidden meaning. For also
He warn'd of persecutions, and foretold
Of many that are first, yet shall be last,
And last that shall be first ! Small wonder 'tis
If ever wider grows the hapless breach
Between Him and the Rulers. Unto them
Doth He not boast His freedom from the yoke
E'en of the Torah, ay, and in strange ways ?
For when they brought to Him in Temple court
The adulterous woman, who by Moses' law
They would have stoned, He rather shielded her
'Gainst the accusers, whom He put to shame !
In truth, His words and acts do oft awake
Most scornful questioning.

I pray ye now
Misjudge me not thereof ; but duty prompts
That I should speak what hath been whisper'd oft
Among the populace. 'Tis even said

The Story of the Twelve

That these great labours have o'erwrought His
brain

Unto the verge of madness : and by some,
That the Arch-Prince of spirits now hath risen
Against His rival power, and doth avenge
Hell's outcast brood—by strange demonic spells
Around the Master cast ! It is well known
That when He bode awhile at Peter's house,
His mother and kinsfolk sought there for Him,
Urged by such rumours, and would take Him back
To peaceful Nazareth. Naught came of it ;
But spake He unto His own kith and kin,
As scarce was seemly !

JOHN

And scarce seemly 'tis,
Judas, that thou shouldst lend unto some things
Thine heart, as readily as e'en thine ears !
Madness, forsooth ! yea, He did turn that charge
'Gainst those who made it ; for none better knew
Who roused His kinsmen's fears ! And was it not
Thereafter that He spake such parables
Beside the lake, as held the crowd entranced ?
I ween that nothing more was heard that day
Concerning madness ! but there came to Him
Many who begg'd to join our company,
And learn of such a Rabbi. And yet none
Would He accept as worthy. Dost thou think,
Judas, such harbour'd thoughts as these, the
proofs
Of our own worthiness ?

The Crisis

JUDAS ISCARIOT

Nay, thou dost judge

My words amiss, O son of Zebedee !

I spake but thoughts which rumour fashioneth

In many minds, and am alone concern'd,

As thou, for aught which may advance our cause,

Or may discredit it. And it is this

That urges me to boldness. For our hope

Is oft revived, only to perish swift ;

And each great chance but passes in its turn,

Unto futility—as seems belike

With this the last and greatest ! Wherefore now

Did He who raised up Lazarus not wait

To reap the harvest of His spreading fame,

But fled from Caiaphas ? Can any doubt

The High Priest knows his mind, and will be quick

To act thereon ? 'Twas a shrewd stroke he dealt

By that one word—" It is expedient

Rather that one should for the people die,

Than the whole nation perish but for one."

And a long arm the Sanhedrin will stretch

For its accomplishment ! Nay, hath He not

Himself said this same thing—in other words ?

Brethren, if He and Caiaphas speak truth,

It is a fearful truth ! For see ye not

Unto what ends such thoughts as these may

tempt ?

To save the nation from the wrath of Rome—

And at the cost of one !—Then little choice

Doth lie with those who court at any cost

The favour of Tiberius, and deny

The Story of the Twelve

The Galilæan's claims ! But so, likewise,
May not the Zealot count it worth all risk
To bring to head the cause of One he deems
Likely to prove Messiah ?

If He, then,

Be all we have believed Him, now henceforth
May all the unseen Powers conspire as one—
For Israel's sake, for ours—ay, for His own—
And urge Him blazon it ! For, by my troth,
Unless I read amiss these many signs,
The die must soon be cast for good or ill.—
Messiah's Kingdom, and twelve thrones ! or else
We are undone as only those may be,
Who fall the deeper, having vainly dared
Ambition's loftiest heights !

JAMES

I envy not

Thy wisdom, Judas, if alone it mate
With such a spirit. For thy words do fall
Upon the heart, and shrivel unto death
All gracious thoughts therein—as winter's blast,
Returning, threatens the tender growth of spring.
The course our Master takes is as perplex'd
To us as unto thee. Yet thou at least
Dost gauge our minds amiss, if thou shouldst think
To force us into action which might seem
Disloyal unto Him. Nor canst thou hope
To play upon our fears with subtle craft ;
Nor on our wounded pride, which knoweth well
The justice of its humbling at His hands.

The Crisis

And if, as seems, He hath a mind to purge
The nation, ere He stablisheth His throne,
Hath He not cause enough? And if thereby
He pleaseth not the Rulers—why, what then?

NATHANAEL

Yea, well thou mayest ask : for who shall say
That Israel doth receive from them her due?
Now rather hath she fallen on ill days,
When no man knoweth if Shekinah dwells
Within the Holy Place : and they who serve
The altars hold their office but for gain,
And in self-glorying. Hast thou forgot,
Judas, the wondrous parable He spake
Of the Good Shepherd?

JUDAS ISCARIOT

Who could well forget
The amazing claims of Him who utter'd it?
For more than mortal lips e'er dared—He claim'd,
When ask'd He : " Who convicteth me of sin ? "
And straight declared He spake that truth from God!
Well might they ask, who heard these awful words :
" Whom makest thou thyself ? " If He doth claim
Such things as these, why doth He not claim
more—
And of immediate purpose?

NATHANAEL

Verily,
He hath made claims such as none ever made.

The Story of the Twelve

But then 'tis *He* who claims ! And I would ask,
If Judas e'er hath found Him less than fits
The measure of His claims ? Men can but claim
Such things as are within the common range
Of man's experience. Then either He
Is less than that which humanly is best—
Or He is greater far, in that His claims
Transcend all others, to amazing heights !
Yea, blasphemy they were, on other lips ;
But, Judas, were the blasphemy not ours—
If, knowing Him so well, we hold His words
Less worthy than Himself !

JOHN

Yet hath He made
Such claims from the beginning ; nor conceal'd
His purposes from any. In those days—
Ere thou didst know Him, Judas—was there brought
Before the Master at Capernaum,
One stricken of the palsy. Unto him
Forthwith He said : “ Son, be thou of good cheer ;
Thy sins are now forgiven.” And then He proved
Before the taunting scribes that not in vain
He claim'd such power, since straightway, at His
word,
The man arose and walk'd ! Doth it seem strange
If One, who can forgive the sins of man,
Acclaim Himself as sinless ? And hath aught
Arisen since to justify our doubt
Of power beyond our vision ; as of that
We oft have proved by sight ?

The Crisis

Yea, I would speak
Of things so high and sacred, as do scarce
Seem lawful to be known, save that thereby
We may the better judge of holiness
Surpassing earthly nature ! Unto me
The Baptist told it—who had heard thereof
Himself from Jesus :—that a Spirit strange,
Drove Him straightway, after He was baptized,
Into the wilderness. And there He dwelt
Full forty days alone : the while it seem'd
Infernal powers of evil thither throng'd,
And did assail His soul with hellish craft !
Thrice was He sorely tempted to forswear
That consecrating purpose which had urged
His baptism of John. And thrice did He
O'ercome their devilish wiles. Yea, their Arch-
Prince,

Satan, majestic, as if he were crown'd
With power omnipotent, e'en offer'd Him
The kingdoms and the glory of the world,
If He would there fall down and worship him
But for a moment ! At such awful cost
Was that great conflict won that at the last
He lay aswoon, as dead. Then came to Him
Angelic spirits, comforting Him long
With heavenly ministries.

So have there been
Yet other things revealèd unto some ;
And all conspire to set on Him a seal
As One apart, destined by will Divine
To some transcendent end !

The Story of the Twelve

JUDAS ISCARIOT

I may but speak
Of such experiences as have befall'n
Within that sphere of knowledge which I share
Alone with mortals. And am less concern'd
To know whence come His power and holiness—
Than whereunto they tend. Is it enough
That He be even sinless, as He saith ?
Ay, there it is !—why doth not He, who dares
To speak such sayings, and to do such deeds—
Play yet the full Messiah ?

MATTHEW

There are words,
In boldness so beyond all human thought,
Their very utterance doth seem alone
Their pledge of awful truth ! If 'tis not ours
To judge Him aught at fault in such high things ;
How may we judge Him, if the path He takes,
Is not as we had chosen ? And may not
Our hopes revive, since He to Ephraim sped ?
For in His mind there seemeth to revolve
Some new and weighty matter. It may be
We soon shall learn He claimeth naught, indeed,
He may not well fulfil !

THOMAS

Would I might share
As readily thy hope ! Yet now, alas,
My heart may not shake off this brooding care
Which ever grows the more, as e'en my love

The Crisis

Increases for the Master. But, in truth,
If now my fearful heart doth link the thought
Of woe and death with One so great as He—
Since He so linketh it—must, then, my fear
Be judged akin to doubt, whether He be
Himself the true Messiah? God forbid!
Yet so a thousand times I ask myself,
And scarce know how to answer. This I know,
That ne'er can I conceive of a Messiah
Greater than He!—yet I as surely fear
He treads a path which leads but at the last
To some disastrous goal!

SIMON PETER

But if endued
With more than mortal power—as thou believ'st—
May He not then avert it?

THOMAS

An He might!—
Yet would He? It is not for His own sake
He holds His power. If He doth deem Himself,
By some amazing purpose, onward driven
Along a fateful pathway!—who may think
He will not tread it to the appointed end?
Nay, such might be, if He were otherwise
Than that He is: but scarce know I for what
I yet could wish Him other! How distraught
And vain this maze of human circumstance,
Which hides within itself some element
Of more than human meaning! Fate decrees,

The Story of the Twelve

But is in turn decreed to other ends
By still a higher fate, till we are lost
In baffled wonder at that giddy height
Where dwells the final Power which governs all.
Meanwhile, tho' we see not the winds that blow
From out the heavens, yet do we see, alas,
How surely they o'erwhelm the stateliest barque,
E'en as the meanest, and the awaiting rocks
Neither discriminate ! 'Tis true, indeed,
That for a moment He hath sought escape.
But, as before, so nathless will He turn
Back to Jerusalem, not e'en deterr'd
By threat of Caiaphas ! And if so be,
Then, brethren, by the troth which we have sworn,
And by our love, let us go also there
That we may die with Him.

SIMON ZELOTES

To die with Him !

Nay, Didymus, what words are these, withal,
To cheer our drooping spirits ? Must thy love
Thus prove itself alone in thy despair,
And feed but on the darkest thoughts He breathes
In moments of dejection ? He hath moods,
As all men have—now hopeful, and now sad—
And for some purpose bideth yet His time.
But when it comes, I doubt me not, in truth,
Nor Caiaphas nor Annas shall prevail
To turn from Cæsar the avenging stroke !
Thou wouldst face death !—ay, it were bravely
vow'd,

The Crisis

O Didymus, but all too sadly thought,
And tendeth to sore heaviness of heart
In those who hear thee.

SIMON PETER

And yet if bechance,
'Twere needful, Didymus doth speak for all.
But wherefore such forebodings, since He show'd
How lightly holds He even death itself,
By raising Lazarus ! Ah, surely that
Convinceth us, how needless this despair !
If He return again—we go with Him—
But needs it that we go as those foredoom'd
To sure disaster ?

PHILIP

Tho' it hath been said,
He sets but little store on miracles ;
Yet this at Bethany was passing great !
Yea, as the patient husbandman waits long
Ere he may reap the harvest he hath sown—
So surely waiteth He.

JAMES

God grant it speed
Unto the ripening !

NATHANAEL

Then, verily,
The ancient prophecy shall be fulfill'd—
“ They that now sow in tears shall reap in joy.
And he who weepeth, while he bears the seed,

The Story of the Twelve

Shall surely come again with joyfulness,
Bringing his sheaves with him ! ”

JUDAS ISCARIOT [*aside*

Could I so think

As doth this guileless one, I yet would wait
The Nazarene's intent. Would I might tell
What harvest He expects ! But in good sooth,
It seemeth scant of joy, however full
It be of aught beside. And yet, perchance,
It may be as they think : and He but waits
Until this miracle hath wrought its work
Upon the people's minds. It far surpass'd
All that He ever did, and well may bring
The final harvesting at last anear !
God grant it rotteth not, ere it be reap'd,
Or He forestall'd by those who gather quick
To their own gain—by whomsoever sown !
I fain must reap somewhat, or here or there.
With Him—if so He will ; if not—why then,
There are yet others ! But I promised naught
To those who sought me out—by Annas sent
In secret—ere we had left Bethany !
Craft ! 'tis a timely tool, yet clearly not
Unto the Master's usage. Shall I, then,
Not measure mine with theirs—and for His sake—
Since craft with craft alone may hope to vie ?
Whate'er may happen, must e'en happen soon.
Meanwhile my sickle waits in mine own hand,
To use as chance determines.

BOOK VI

REVIVING HOPES

SCENE.—*At Bethany.*

TIME.—*The evening of Tuesday in Passion week, and two days after the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.*

PRESENT.—*All the Disciples except Judas Iscariot.*

SIMON PETER

Not swifter on the Galilæan lake
Did fear and hope, of old, their challenge throw
Mid changing storm and calm, than it hath been
Of late with the loved Master. For 'twas here
That, at the call of sorrow, He return'd
And wrought His greatest sign ; then fled in haste
To Ephraim, from the threat of Caiaphas,
And bode awhile in secret. Yet, despite
Our warning fears—and His—would He set forth
Unto the feast again. But on the way—
How tense the look with which, all steadfastly,
He set His face as if toward a goal
We might not hinder Him ! And we in awe
And silence follow'd, daring not to ask
Of those dread thoughts which yet, alas, too well

The Story of the Twelve

His shadow'd brow betray'd. But even now
Seems He as one to whom there hath return'd
Calm reassurance, since 'twas quickly known
That He who raised up Lazarus was come,
And loud they sang His praise. And greater
still

The fervour grew when we reach'd Jericho :
For, as ye know, blind Bartimæus sat
Beside the gate, and cried, " Thou, David's son,
Have mercy on me ! " and before them all
The Master gave him sight. But soon He show'd
How little reck'd He of their praise or blame,
By choosing to be guest of such an one
E'en as Zacchæus—the chief publican !
Ye know what then befell. And when at morn
We journey'd forth again—e'en as a stream
Doth swell its course by tributary rills—
So we, by pilgrim bands from far and near,
Swept forward on the way, while each supplied
Fresh guerdon to His fame. But who may speak
Of that which on the morrow did occur,
When, as a conqueror, the Master rode
Down Olivet, o'er Kidron, and straight on,
Up thro' the City gate, until He came
Unto the very Temple, midst such scenes
As Passover ne'er saw ! The lowly beast
He rode could scarcely make its way mid those
Who waved palm branches, while e'en others
strew'd

Their garments in His path. And all the air
Was fill'd with shouts which quickly grew to song :—

Reviving Hopes

“ Hosanna to the Son of David !
Blessed is He that cometh now
In the name of the Lord.
To Israel’s King our knees we bow :
Hosanna in the highest ! ”

Methought at first He would rebuke such words :
But turning, saw strange joy upon His face,
Yea, solemn ecstasy, e’en as of one
Who lists to well-loved music !

ANDREW

As again
When yesterday the very Temple courts
With glad Hosannas rang from children’s lips,
Which none might close. For there is that in Him
Which ever wins their love !

SIMON PETER

What meaneth it,
Save that He counts such homage as His due ?
“ The Son of David, King of Israel ! ”
Did He not then confess Himself to be
Messiah, by that word ? Again we thought
The hour had come, and that to swift account
He meant to turn His triumph. But it pass’d,
As other hopes, away.

SIMON ZELOTES,

So seemeth it :
Yet who may doubt, ’neath such authority

The Story of the Twelve

As He hath late assumed, that He conceals
Some mighty plan awhile ! But it were well
The final stroke be not too long delay'd,
Lest all this fervour wane. For, by my troth,
I thought with Peter that yon glorious day
Had mark'd the end of these uncertainties,
And waited but His word to head that host
Of eager Galilæans—yet none came !
Then did I judge that He would fain reserve
That moment for the Temple : and at eve
Expectantly we enter'd—but He stood,
Gazing awhile as one in reverie,
Then outward pass'd again. Yet hope revived,
When on the morrow thither He return'd
And bade once more the lawless traffickers
Depart the sacred courts. And not less bold
In word than deed, how did He put to shame
The elders when He claim'd authority
Divine as that of John ! Then were they fear'd
The Baptist to acknowledge or deny.
Thus foil'd, ye saw how those at enmity
Made common cause, that even so, perchance,
They might ensnare Him. The Herodians
Ask'd if 'twere lawful that our nation pay
Tribute to Cæsar. By the vow I swore
As Zealot, to avenge the hapless fate
Of Judas of Gamala !—I confess
I would at first that He had full disown'd
All tribute right to him whose image stood
On the denarius He bade them show.
Yet, as in all His words, so then there flash'd

Reviving Hopes

Wisdom enrich'd by such Diviner grace
As may not be gainsaid :—" Render therefore
Unto the Cæsar, things that Cæsar's are :
To God, the things of God." Cæsar and God !—
'Tis a hard word : yet since He utter'd it,
How stands unmask'd the veil'd hypocrisy
Of the Herodians' question ! Were they, then,
Jealous for God against the Cæsar's claims,
Or eager but to grasp, in their own hands,
The Roman sceptre ? Were God better served
If Caiaphas were Cæsar ?

And, e'en as
With the Herodians, so answer'd He
The Pharisees and Sadducees alike,
And cover'd with confusion. All pretence
That smooth'd unrighteousness did He unmask
With biting scorn ; and verily was naught
Spared them in the exposure . . . " Hypocrites " !—
Ay, 'twas the mildest word : for irony
Whetted His blade unto yet sharper edge.
" Blind guides " they were, who, " straining out the
gnat,
Swallow the camel " ! . . . " Whited sepulchres " !—
Whose outward fairness hid corruption foul. . . .
" Offspring of vipers " ! . . . And yet anger fierce
Turn'd at the last to pity ; and His voice
Broke well-nigh unto sobs as He foretold
Of woes that should o'ertake Jerusalem.
Woe and disaster, desolation, death !
Why doth He ever speak of such as these,
And so return to them, e'en when some mood

The Story of the Twelve

Of happier omen hath uplifted Him
For a brief moment ? Wherefore doth He quench
The spark He might so quickly fan to flame
Within the people's minds—if now He means
To turn Him unto them ?

PHILIP

It was that thought
Perplex'd me, when but yesterday some Greeks
Sought audience of the Lord. For they had
seen
His great triumphal entry, and believed
That He could be none other than, in truth,
The Promised One of Israel. Nay, so great
Their adoration of Him, that they craved
Since our own Rulers spurn'd Him—He be urged
To turn unto their nation, which would fain
Give welcome unto Him ! Tho' sore amazed,
Yet so their ardour touch'd me, that I spake
Thereof to Andrew ; and we judged it well
To bring them to the Master ; and ye know
What follow'd thereupon. The very deeps
Of His amazing Being seem'd to ope,
And from within well'd speech so mystical
That scarce our senses knew if words or signs
From Heaven were vouchsafed ! And with what
awe
The wondering Greeks did turn and look on
Him,
Ere each made deep obeisance and withdrew
Before His wistful gaze !

Reviving Hopes

JOHN

Yet was it seen

That all He spake, sounded unto their ears
As ominous as unto us, alas,
Too often hath it been. Yea, it were vain
To hide away our fears, despite our love—
Nay, love but quickeneth them ! For breathes
there not

Too oft from Him the cadence of farewell
In meaning word and act, while warnings dread
Break from prophetic lips of One made wise
With more than earthly wisdom ! E'en the while
He rode triumphantly amid the throng,
Loud hail'd as Israel's King—when first His eyes
Beheld the Holy City—lo, He wept,
And spake as if He saw her glory laid
Already in the dust ! Yet ne'er I saw
Jerusalem so fair !—a jewel set
'Mid flashing gold of minaret and dome ;
While on the hill of Zion there uprose,
O'er all, the Temple in proud majesty,
Matchless for strength and beauty.

And e'en so

Did we remind Him but this very noon,
As from its courts we pass'd. But said He not,
It yet should be o'erthrown, and not one stone
Upon another left ? Then four of us
Went with the Master on to Olivet :
And Andrew ask'd Him when such things should
be,

And what the sign thereof. And like to one

The Story of the Twelve

Of Israel's ancient seers, He told of ills
That should befall the nation. Yea, He spake
Of tribulation that should surely pass
Across the face of earth, as stormful clouds
Blot out the noonday sun : of war and strife,
Of pestilence and famine : and the sword,
Reaping red ruin, as the sickle reaps
The ruddy wealth of harvest ! Then at last
Should be the coming of the Son of Man,
With power and great glory, and th' elect
From the four winds should gather unto Him !
Spell-bound with awe, we listen'd, for such words
Pass'd mortal knowledge, saving that He spake
As of some far-off woe which yet did seem
To cast its shadow nigh. In parables
Of dread significance, He bade us watch
As for a world's eclipse ! For so it seem'd
While yet He spake, as if at last were set
The final throne of judgment ; and thereon
He, as the Son of Man, all nations judged
With awful justice !

JAMES

Yet, 'tis passing strange
That while He bolder claims authority
In act and judgment, He doth ever speak
More plainly of ill fate awaiting Him
With all-frustrating woe ! Who may forget
His words last Sabbath eve, when at the feast
In Simon's house, Mary with costliest nard
Anointed then His feet ?

Reviving Hopes

ANDREW

Ah, who indeed ;
Or who forget her wondrous deed of love,
That of its purity would yield not less
Its due to Him—than once the Magdalene,
From love's forgiven shame ! Yet, in good sooth,
Came not that thought at first, but wonderment
At what seem'd lavishness. But when in words
Judas rebuked it ; and the Master pled :
“ Against my burying hath she kept this.
The poor ye always have with you ; but me
Ye have not always.” Then, alas, how base
The thought appear'd which had begrudged Him
aught
That seem'd so sadly dear !

MATTHEW

So did we come
To share thy thoughts with thee. But at what cost
Of woeful words to Him ! His “ burying ” !
What meant He ? Did He think to shame us, then
With the pretended fear that we should grudge
E'en the last loving rite of sepulchre—
Had He e'er needed it ? But such a thought
Bemoeks alike our trust—and His own power,
As being true Messiah !

JOHN

Is our faith
Then mock'd of this our love's solicitude,
Which is but human ? For His “ burying ” !

The Story of the Twelve

O words that make love easy—and faith hard :
Till I am fear'd lest I may only hold
Each in despite the other ! Plainer words
Than even these spake He this very eve,
As leaving Olivet we homeward turn'd
With hearts too full for speech.

I know not how :
But seem'd the setting sun as loth to leave
So fair a scene as that whereon we gazed
Back o'er the Kidron, and the purpling shades
Of lone Gethsemane. And crowning all,
Above the City rose the Temple, veil'd
In solemn grandeur. Yet, as ne'er before,
There seem'd to brood o'er all some haunting sense
Of wistful mystery ! So turn'd we thence
And follow'd wonderingly, until He broke
Our burden'd silence with low-spoken words,
As half unto Himself. But I o'erheard,
Who was most near, and nearer still I drew,
If I might read, perchance, upon His face
That which I dare not ask. 'Twas woe-begone ;
And on His brow the beaded sweat of one
Who travail'd sore within ! Then with strain'd look
Before Him cast, He clearer did repeat
The words I fear'd to hear : " Ye know, indeed,
'Tis but two days unto the Passover ;
And till the Son of Man shall be betray'd
E'en to be crucified." " Master ! " I cried,
" What sayest Thou ? Nay, Thou art overwrought."
And made to clasp Him : but He gently drew
His mantle from my grasp, and answer'd, " Nay,

Reviving Hopes

Belovèd John ; for so it needs must be.”
And there was that within His voice and mien
Forbade aught further. Thereupon we came
To His abode ; and, as one who would haste,
He pass’d within.

THOMAS

O son of Zebedee,
Art sure He said “ betray’d ” ?—That is a word
Of ugly meaning, and I like it not.
All else, indeed, were dark enough He spake
To those of ye who were alone with Him
Yonder on Olivet. I seem to hear,
Within such words, the sound of closing doors
That ne’er shall ope again !—the near approach
Of some gaunt woe, in which our cherish’d hopes
Shall surely perish vainly ! Who could doubt
His last great word unto that Temple throng
Would be to His undoing ? Never scourge,
Wielded by hand of man, so struck the flesh
As smote His irony the haughty pride
Of scribe and Pharisee ! And baffled rage
At such humiliation scarce will rest
Until it be avenged. Yet so He warn’d
Ere we came hither, as He needs must come,
For He hath ne’er deceived us. I also
Came thus prepared to share in all with Him,
As fate appointed ; for these gathering fears
Leave scanty hope. But what is this He saith ?—
That He should be betray’d ! Ah, but that word
Bespeaks a traitor !—one within the camp,

The Story of the Twelve

Whose very boasted friendship yields the means
To play a traitor's part. I judge no man,
When for myself I say the cursèd thought
Burns like Gehenna's fire within my soul !

(CHORUS OF VOICES)

And, Didymus—in ours !

THOMAS

Nay, God forbid
That I should seem to judge ye otherwise
Than as myself ! Then must it be, in truth,
He spake of one all unbeknown to us.
For surely it is passing human thought,
That any who hath shared the Master's love
Repay with treachery !

Are not all here . . . ?
Then is it well that with a single voice
We may disclaim such baseness !

NATHANAEL

All are here,
Save him of Kerioth.

THOMAS

Ah, Judas !—true
I had forgotten him ; mayhap because
Of late he oft is absent from our midst.
Hath he not many friends he visiteth
Within the City ?

Reviving Hopes

NATHANAEL

Yea, he hath more friends,
Methinks, than it were well—since some of them
Are not the friends of Him whom Judas serves.

THOMAS

Such words mean much from one who aye is wont
Of others to think well. I pray thee speak
Plainly whereof thou hintest : lest we nurse
Unjust suspicions, harmful to ourselves,
As unto Judas !

NATHANAEL

Now could I well wish
I had a mind as slow as thine to doubt
The good in others—as 'tis quick to find
Distrust and fear of self ! Yet not alone
Am I in such misgivings, and but speak,
Lest harm of silence come.

Do I say aught
That ye will not confirm, if I recall
How 'twixt ourselves and Judas there hath grown
Some subtle sense of discord, which doth sap
The very root of friendship ? Of our band—
Tho' not as one of us—he stands aloof,
A solitary figure ! I am loth
To speak of such affairs as we did give
Unto his keeping—yet hath not just cause
Arisen for distrust ? He holds the bag
With jealousy of hand as far exceeds

The Story of the Twelve

All lawful stewardship : and none may know,
Saving himself, either what goes therein,
Or cometh out thereof !

PHILIP

Yea, as to that,
I ask'd the Master once if 'twere not meet
That some account be render'd. But He begg'd
That we should trust each other to the full,
As He had trusted all. " Beware," said He,
" Lest opportunity to Judas given
In this my confidence, be jeopardized
By lack of thine." What further could be said
To such appeal as this ?

NATHANAEL

Naught, save, indeed,
That it behoveth each to prove himself
More worthy of such trust ! For each hath faults,
Even as Judas ; but now, God forbid
They should be such as e'en would seem to bear
Semblance of treachery unto our Lord !

JAMES

Truly, our wonder at this strange delay
To claim His kingly power hath grown at times
To murmuring impatience. Yet could none
Surely allow his utmost discontent
To harbour treachery !

Reviving Hopes

SIMON PETER

If such could be—

'Twere baseness beyond words ! Art thou assured,
Nathanael, of thy fears ?

NATHANAEL

A friend I have

Within the City—and who favours us—
Did give me word this day that of our band
One, Judas, had held secret intercourse
With a chief Rabbi who was known to share
The confidence of Annas ! When I ask'd,
How such a thing was known, and when it
happ'd—

He told me how he stood among the throng
That watch'd the Master on the morn He rode
From Bethany. And by him there stood one
Who mock'd at first, but speedily was moved
To curious questioning concerning Him
The people hail'd Messiah. Suddenly—
And finding that his neighbour knew by sight
The Lord's disciples well—he sought the name
Of one he pointed out with gesture keen.

'Twas Judas !—but such unconceal'd surprise
Lay in the question, that my friend then ask'd,
“Dost thou know aught of him ? ” “Nay,” he
replied,

“I know him not by name, nor like his look ;
But am assured 'tis he who late last night
Sought audience of my master.”

The Story of the Twelve

MATTHEW

Said he so ?

Then 'twas the night when Mary did anoint
The Master's feet with nard ! I mind me well
What sullen wrath the mien of Judas show'd,
After the Master's chiding. Then he rose
And without word stole thence as if in haste,
While still we tarried there.

PHILIP

'Twas even so :

But art thou sure, Nathanael, it was he
Of whom the stranger spake ?

NATHANAEL

He thus replied—

When question'd why he so remember'd him :—
“A furtive look he had, and eyes that glanced
Uneasily from lowering brows, o'er which
His tawny hair fell tangled. 'Neath his cloak
He held a bag conceal'd. I knew 'twas so,
For a slight slip upon the marble stair,
Betray'd the chink of coin. I thought him then
Some usurer who kept his purport hid,
Since name he did refuse, save that of one
Who came on urgent business.” Of a truth,
So spake the Rabbi's servant ; but knew not
What further happ'd, save that his master seem'd
Well satisfied therewith.

Then straight I sought
To learn from Nicodemus of aught plann'd

Reviving Hopes

Within the Sanhedrin. Full well he knew
The Rabbi to be chief 'mongst those who form
The High Priest's party ; and it was by such
The flame of hatred 'gainst the Nazarene
Was fann'd within the Council. And 'twas said
They knew the charge that He acclaim'd Himself
Messiah, would be vain ; unless also
They could accuse Him of conspiracy
Against the Cæsar's power !

JAMES

Yet, look they not
Unto Messiah for this very thing,
When He shall come ?

SIMON ZELOTES

But may it not e'en be
They play a craftier game ; and think to speed
The turn of fortune's wheel, yet in such-wise
As ne'er shall leave them losers ? For, in truth,
If they should force Him to declare Himself
By Yea or Nay ;—then have they hasten'd on
The Kingdom of Messiah !—or exposed
A prophet false—who also had design'd
To rival Cæsar !

JOHN

But whence to their minds
Could come such thoughts as these ? For, verily,
Have they not, from the first, hard set themselves
Against the Nazarene ?

The Story of the Twelve

SIMON ZELOTES

From whom, indeed,
Save one who first had nursed such thoughts himself !
And dost thou not recall how Judas once
Reveal'd his own surmisings ? I would ask
Nathanael, if aught Nicodemus told
Gave clue unto such reasonings as these
Within the Sanhedrin ?

NATHANAEL

Naught said he more
Of motive which might prompt the crafty minds
Of Caiaphas and Annas—who, in sooth,
Would speak not all they think. But it would seem
He gather'd in the Council that dismay,
At the great furor which the Master roused
When came He to the feast, had changed to scorn,
Since He had fail'd to turn it to account.
And e'en 'twas said that discontent was rife
Among the Lord's disciples ; and that some
But waited only for a favouring chance
Ere they deserted Him !

JAMES

May God forgive
Judas—for I will not—if he hath spread
Such foul report as this ! Thou hast seen more,
Simon Zelotes, of the Keriote
Than any here :—how wouldest thou account
For treachery, such as it is surmised
He may be guilty of ?

Reviving Hopes

SIMON ZELOTES

I needs must think
That it could be no other, and but hear
In this report the echo of such things
As Judas oft hath hinted. Love of gain
And lust of avarice are in his blood—
Who was an usurer—and still he tests
The worth of all things by the shekel's weight.
So have I seen how keen his jealousy,
When others have sought favours, emulous
Of highest honour and exalted rank
Within the coming Kingdom. Think ye not,
Such things have been as fuel unto fire
To one as Judas, who with ruder hands
Might well seek any means whereby to gain
Advantage o'er his fellows ?

JAMES

Ah, thy words
Do smite me now, Zelotes, and I know
Full well whereof thou speakest ; nor deny
Some cause for thy reproach. Yet I would pray,
Bethink thee, how—when it was ask'd of late
By our fond mother, for her sons to sit
Upon the Master's right hand and His left,
Within His Kingdom—that we also dared
Accept the challenge, from His cup to drink,
And all His danger share ! He own'd it so :
But said such honours were not His to give,
But by His Father given ! Yet wouldst thou judge,
Zelotes, that our act conceal'd in aught

The Story of the Twelve

Such thought of baseness and of treachery
As is of Judas whisper'd ?

JOHN

God forbid

That our ambition may have stirr'd such guile
Within the heart of Judas : or should prompt
The thought that vanity rebuked could turn
Our loyalty aside ! And if the fault
Of aught that Judas doeth, or hath done,
Lie at our door—then woe be unto us,
The sons of Zebedee !

MATTHEW

In sooth, methinks

Judas doth little need encouragement
If such a course he takes ! Self-evident
Is that thrawn mood which grows with inward lack
Of large-eyed charity ; and ever girds
At such sweet grace in others. And have I
Felt more than ye, perforce, his harsh dispraise
Of favours which the Master oft bestow'd
Upon the poor and outcast. So I mark'd
With what displeasure he beheld my friend
Zacchæus hail'd by Jesus, and proclaim'd
From His own lips a son of Abraham
Before the Pharisees ! And I recall,
Ere we came hither, his resentful words
What time the Master spake His parables
Against the scribes who murmur'd that He ate
With publicans and sinners. Was e'er heard

Reviving Hopes

A love so marvellous as when He told
Of wayward prodigal, who home return'd
In woeful beggary of swineherd's guise,
Yet by his father welcomed, since he came
With shame and penitence ? Yet was the heart
Of Judas all untouch'd ; for he but spake
Thereafter with disdain. Scarce have we need
To judge of Judas now, since he hath judged
Thus of himself.

SIMON ZELOTES

In truth, may God forbid
That I should seem to judge of any here
In such-wise as of Judas ! I had kept
My words unto myself, if I had thought
That any would so press them needlessly
Unto such self-rebuke ! Judas alone
Must answer unto Judas—and his Lord—
For that he doeth. But lest I reproach
More than, perchance, is just ; I also speak
As one not blameless who, myself, ne'er lack'd
The Zealot's high ambition !

THOMAS

There is none,
Who knows himself, that shareth not thy thought ;
Or will misjudge the purpose which hath drawn
These things from thee, Zelotes. Rest assured,
Ye sons of Zebedee, that ye have proved
Your love and loyalty beyond the doubt
Of any of the brethren ! As to this,

The Story of the Twelve

Concerning Judas, speak we not in vain,
And as of things we know not ; save alone
Of dubious rumour, which may yet return
Disproved to shame our hearts ? 'Twere ill, indeed,
If of ourselves the flickering lamp of hope
Should be extinguish'd by the gusty breath
Of discord or mistrust. Soon must it blaze
To brightest glory—or in darkness sink—
As circumstance appoints ! Hath Judas power,
Think ye, to fan such flame—if it would die :
Or quench—if it would live ?

And yet, while all
Trembles within the balance, do we watch
The Master, with majestic calm, pursue
A way we may but follow fearfully.
The day is now far spent. He doth intend
To pass the morrow here in quietness
And fellowship with us ; nor go again
Into the City, till we go next day
To keep the Passover. Then let no word
That hath been told of Judas now disturb
His mind at such a time.

SIMON ZELOTES

Nay, not a word !
For, mark ye, that the Master doth regard
Our company as one ; and showeth not
Suspicion e'en of him whom we this night
Have freely spoken of.

But thou hast read
Within my words, O Didymus, such thoughts

Reviving Hopes

As I did ne'er intend. For verily,
If even all were true which we have heard,
What cause for dark forebodings, as seem thine ?
'Tis not to say that Judas shall succeed—
If even so he plotteth. Hast forgot,
The Master pledged to Simon Peter once
Twelve thrones awaited us ? If Judas now
Seeketh his own o'er-rashly, 'tis his own
Alone he jeopardizes. Courage, then !
For what may well be nigh. One word from
Him,
And yonder Hierarchs may find the tide
Of Galilæan fervour hath not ebb'd
As swiftly as they thought !

SIMON PETER

A rallying word !
And fitly spoken, as should be the last
Ere we depart. What night-bred fears are these
That we should nurse before the night doth
fall ?
If Judas go,—are there not left enough
To aid the Master, when at last He deems
The rightful moment come ! How can it be,
Despite His strange forebodings, that He fail
In such emprise Himself—who promises
High honour unto others ? None may tell
What now a day brings forth : and 'tis belike
That He but waits Passover to proclaim
The Kingdom of Messiah.

The Story of the Twelve

JAMES

'Twould be, in truth
A fitting season wherein to fulfil
The cherish'd hope of Israel !

PHILIP

And, if so,
Doubtless the morrow will disclose to us
More fully His intent.

(OTHERS)

E'en so be it.
God speed the day !

BOOK VII

THE GREAT TRAGEDY

SCENE.—*At Jerusalem, in the house of John Mark, a friend of Jesus and the Disciples.*

TIME.—*The evening of the day on which Jesus had been crucified.*

PRESENT.—*John the beloved Disciple, and John Mark. They are presently joined by the rest of the Disciples, except Thomas and Judas Iscariot.*

JOHN

Hark ! all the City stirs. Hath not the day
Witness'd enough of terror, that the night
Must needs prolong it ? Still the restless crowd
Tosses from lip to lip the fateful names
Of Jesus and Barabbas ! List again !—
Have not the hurrying feet which pass'd awhile,
Hither return'd, and stay'd them even now
Beside the postern-gate . . . ?

JOHN MARK

Ah ! one doth knock :
But low and furtively !

The Story of the Twelve

JOHN

Stay, God forbid

'Tis Pilate's soldiery that seek us out,
With further ill intent ! But, if so be,
Bid them in pity leave this house of woe,
Where Mary, mother of the Nazarene,
Now mourns her dead, with others straightly come
From Joseph's sepulchre.

JOHN MARK

Nay, scarce methinks

It soundeth such as they. Perchance it is
Some other of the brethren—I will ope.

*[He goes and opens the outer gate, returning
presently with the rest of the Disciples, except
Simon Peter, Andrew, Thomas, and Judas
Iscariot.]*

'Tis even as I thought.

JOHN

Now God be praised

That ye have come, who will but share this woe
Which hath o'ertaken all !

SIMON ZELOTES

Peace be to thee

And to this house—a haven verily,
Where we would rest awhile, who are too dazed
To think of whence or whither ; save alone
That life is left to us ! But wherefore life,
Since He no longer lives ? And yet, in sooth,

The Great Tragedy

E'en as a whirlwind did disaster fall
Upon us unaware. Had we but known !—
Ah, God ! it scarce seems possible to think
We supp'd with Him last night. Yet two days
since

Came there not to our ears such ill reports
Concerning Judas, as had all-sufficed,
But for our woeful blindness ?

Would to God,

My foolish sword had in Gethsemane
Slain the accursèd traitor ! Then I too,
At the avenging hands of yonder guard,
Had courted death than shame !

JAMES

Yet not alone

Thou bearest self-reproach. Nay, I the more,
Since close beside the Master did I stand
With John and Peter—when all-suddenly
The Roman guard with stealthy tread appear'd,
Led secretly by Judas !

JOHN

Ye do speak

But vain and idle words, which ill accord
With this our sacred sorrow, and with all
That fell from Him at yester Passover
And the last anguish'd vigil !

Can ye deem

The sympathy He craved was such as needs
The aid of warring weapons ? Mind ye not,

The Story of the Twelve

When Peter smote at Malchus with his sword ;
The Master bade him sheathe it, and declared
That if He will'd, He had at His command
Legions of Angels ! With such majesty
He bore Himself, that first the guard fell back,
In awe before Him.

SIMON ZELOTES

If He held such power
To summon Angels !—why had He not given
The strength of ten to each ? and we had then
O'er-match'd that rabble horde, and rallied swift
A Galilæan host. And then, mayhap,
Jerusalem had witness'd other scenes,
Than such as now have left our shatter'd band
The mock of all men !

For is He not dead ?—
Jesus the Nazarene ! Now, by my troth,
'Tis well Barabbas lives ! Pilate, perchance,
Knew better than the hated Caiaphas,
Which of the twain had Rome most cause to fear.
For, felon tho' he be, Barabbas, too,
Is a hot-blooded Zealot ; and since now
He owes his life to Jesus, may bethink
He best can pay that debt by readiness
For further insurrection ! Oft it is,
A tool of baser metal doth succeed,
Where one more finely temper'd courts defeat.
We even heard it whisper'd in the throng
How he applauds the Master : and 'tis said
He wept at his release, and swore 'twere well

The Great Tragedy

If he, a malefactor, thus should die
In place of one so noble ! Nay, in truth,
If Caiaphas had not urged on the guard
To hurry forth with him—'tis hard to say
What might not then have happ'd.

JOHN

I pray thee—peace,
Simon Zelotes ! Hath there not this day
Been violence enough that thou shouldst prate,
As any blustering soldier of the guard
From yon Antonia ? Sword and spear, forsooth !—
What would He aught of such, to save Himself ?
Thou speakest truth : the Nazarene is dead :
Alas, I know it well, who saw Him die :
Yet scarce may doubt, from all I saw this day,
Some strange and awful power He held in thrall,
As might have saved Him ! Said He not, full oft,
He needs must die—and at Jerusalem ?
Yet we believed Him not ; tho' we have mark'd
How that sad fateful note to urgency grew,
E'er since we hither came ? And as a strain
Woven by skill'd musician who, beneath
Euphonious pomp of sound, doth yet convey,
By subtle haunting thread of melody,
Some hint of woe—so hath it been with Him !
For said He not : “ Against my burying
Hath she kept this,” when Mary did anoint
His feet at Bethany ? And as He rode
In triumph to the Temple, He e'en wept
As one who saw proud Salem's glory laid

The Story of the Twelve

'Neath dust and ashes ! So mine eyes this day
Seem to have look'd upon it. Woe is me,
At triumph so short-lived ; and prophecy
Of coming ill, so speedily fulfill'd !
Well know we how the joy of Passover,
We shared last even here, was yet surcharged
With all such tender sadness as constrain'd
To silence and to tears—so tense it grew
With quivering apprehension. Ne'er He spake
Words greater fraught with majesty and awe,
Than when uprising—as with deep intent—
He bless'd and brake the bread, and gave to each :—
“ Take, eat ; this is my body brok'n for you.”
Then afterwards the cup. And as He stood,
Seeming to pledge us by some mystic rite
More solemn than Passover,—we rose up
For very wonder, when again He said :
“ Drink ye all of it : for this is my blood
Of the New Covenant, for many shed.
But verily, I will not drink henceforth,
Until that day I drink it new with you
Within my Father's Kingdom. This do ye
For a remembrance of me.” Then methought
Of those amazing words He spake long since,
Of His own flesh and blood, as meat and drink !—
And I grew sore afraid. And who may speak
Of that last prayer He pray'd with throbbing breath
Ere we went forth ! Ah, God ! were ever heard
Such words from human lips. 'Tis true He spake
Of certain glory, as if then forthwith
To be reveal'd in Him. . . .

The Great Tragedy

SIMON ZELOTES

And even so
He spake of us as if about to share
The coming of His Kingdom—nigh at hand !
Alas, where is it now ?

JOHN

Yet glory, such
As that whereof He spake, seem'd but attain'd
By some dread path He needs must tread alone.
He pray'd, in truth, as one already pass'd
Beyond the world ; yet in His upward flight
Still held by bonds of love, He scarce could break,
With those He left behind. Still grew that thought
To darker semblance in Gethsemane,
Till o'er-wrought nature, spent with vague alarm,
Sank in exhaustion.

Do ye marvel, then,
That suddenly, when Judas came and hail'd
The Master with a kiss, it flash'd on me,
As but some dread fulfilment of a dream
I woke expectant of ; some evil fate,
Forewarn'd, but not averted ?

PHILIP

Yet, how so,
Good son of Zebedee ? For thou dost speak
As if naught could avert the impending blow
Which now hath fallen. What strange cowardice
Seem'd so impelling us against our will
To flee Gethsemane ? What mystery

The Story of the Twelve

Saved Judas from our vengeance then and there ?
Yet thou didst bravely stay ; and now, perchance,
Canst tell us more of this. . . .

NATHANAEL

Yea, thou wert next
The Master at the table, when He spake
Of one who would betray Him !—but we scarce
Could tell what happ'd, for wonder, save we heard
That Peter bade thee ask. Then whisper'd He
Too low for us to hear ; and when awhile,
He favour'd Judas with the handed sop,
And bade him do somewhat with urgency ;
We reck'd not ill thereat. But Judas, lo !—
How flash'd the hidden meaning of that scene
Upon me, when I saw him next amidst
The torch-lit shadows of Gethsemane.
Hadst known it, John—thou surely wouldst have
warn'd,
And we had thwarted it !

JOHN

Such times there are
In this bewilder'd world, when from the womb
Of casual circumstance events so spring
To quick fruition, that the mind doth lose
Its hold of their relation, each to each,
And all confuses in wild disarray.
So now there throng on my bemusèd brain—
Words, scenes, and deeds ; as crowd a tortured age
Into a single day-span ! Midst it all,

The Great Tragedy

One Figure stands supreme and marvellous :
Calmly majestic, when at midnight drear
They led Him first to Annas ; till this noon
He died upon the Cross. And since He died !—
What seemeth it to matter whether this
Or that, perchance, had been but otherwise
With one who, seeming fated, yet held fate
As if with mastery ? But I forget :
Of Judas didst thou ask ? Nay, I knew not
On what base quest he left the rest of us
At the Passover table. Yet I heard
The Master whisper that He gave the sop
To him He namèd “ traitor ! ” But that act
Disarm’d suspicion of its keenest sense,
By very graciousness. And was not each
Self-conscious of such fault, as ill-inclined
To judgment of his fellow ; for our pride
Had suffer’d equal shame when, just before,
He stoop’d to wash the feet of all ; since each
Refused the menial task ? And sprang there not
To every lip the cry, “ Lord, is it I ? ”—
When said He, “ One of you betrayeth me ” ?
Some spell lay on me, and my hand was stay’d,
That would lay hold on Judas : and my lips
Were seal’d, that fain had cried, “ Let him not go ! ”
I could but gaze in fascinated awe ;
And as he raised the latch and pass’d without,
Lo, seem’d the night to fall with sudden dark,
And fold the dying day as in a shroud !
Then, ’neath the Master’s words, fear lull’d again,
And dread suspicion eased : save that, thro’ all,

The Story of the Twelve

Some warning note recurr'd, e'en when we sang
Together the great Hallel ere we left
The upper room, and wended slow our way
Down thro' the Kidron valley.

So at last

When Judas with the Temple guard drew near,
Then knew I well what duty call'd him forth :
Yet at the Master's bidding ! Thus all fell—
Evil and good, as but appointed parts
Of some predestined plot. And still that spell
Lay on me from the Master's word and look,
And I could naught but passively obey.
Yea, mock me, an ye will, in this my woe
With talk of arm'd resistance that had saved
My lovèd Lord from death ! Had love avail'd,—
I had not been found wanting sword or stave,
To wield them with the best ! But I have seen
Such things this day as make but idle sense
Of these vain thoughts.

O Master well-beloved !

The power whereby Thou couldst have saved
Thyself,
Were surely naught to such supernal power,
Wherewith Thou couldst so die !

NATHANAEL

Pardon I crave,

O son of Zebedee, if aught I said
Tendeth to wound thee. We have hither come
From Bethany, whereto we fled this morn.
And the shamed bitterness of our own hearts,

The Great Tragedy

Fed by these mournful tidings, leaves rough edge
To thought and feeling. Sore within us now
Rankles this cursèd thing Judas hath done.
Yet with such judgment thou hast shared much else
Of deeper anguish, which at least hath touch'd
Thy wound with softening pity. We would fain
Hear from thee that which thou alone canst tell
Of this disastrous day.

SIMON ZELOTES

Yea, we would hear
More of the Nazarene, whom nevermore
Our eyes shall now behold. And think it not
That any doubt thy courage ; for alone
Didst thou remain with Him whom we forsook.

JOHN

Could I not call ye "brethren," who have shared
The Master's trust with me, I would now keep
My grief all silently. But ye have right
To know what I may tell of these last things
Which happen'd unto Him.

Know ye then, first,
That not alone I follow'd, when we came
From out Gethsemane. For then also
Was Peter with me.

JAMES

Ah, where is Simon ?—
Strange that he and Andrew should be missing !
Now God forbid that Malchus, whom he struck,

The Story of the Twelve

Hath sought revenge on him thro' Caiaphas,
And holds him prisoner !

JOHN

I scarce so think,
For Malchus and the guard were so amazed
At that which Jesus did, and by His words,
That shame fell on them at such arm'd array
'Gainst one so unresisting. But Simon !
Nay, I have seen him not since suddenly
He went from out the court of Caiaphas
At early morn. God grant, where'er he be,
Andrew is with him ; lest some reckless mood
Should tempt him in wild hazard to avenge
The fate of his loved Master !

JAMES

Caiaphas !
How did that crafty schemer bear himself
Before the Nazarene ?

JOHN

First did he ask
Jesus of His disciples, and what things
He taught the common people. He replied :
“ In Temple and in synagogue I spake,
And ever openly. If thou wouldst know,
Ask not of me, but of the multitude
Who heard me oft.” An officer stood by,
Who cried, “ Dost thou so answer the High Priest ? ”
And smote Him on the mouth !

The Great Tragedy

PHILIP

What sayest thou—
A menial of the court to strike his charge
'Fore the High Priest himself! Didst not cry
shame?

JOHN

Angry rebuke sprung to my lips ; and then
Fell check'd, as from the face of Him I loved
A mute appeal forbade. With wondrous calm,
He said : " If I speak evil, prove it so :
If well, why am I smitten ? Callest thou
Not witnesses ? "

NATHANAEL

As doth the law command.

JOHN

So seem'd it then even to Caiaphas,
For there was whispering ; and two stood forth,
Declaring He had said—" I will destroy
This Temple, and rebuild it in three days,"
And that He oft had spoken blasphemies
Against the Holy Place ! The haughty pride
Of the High Priest was stung, that Jesus deign'd
Not to reply : and rising from his seat,
He ask'd, " Thou answerest nothing unto these ? "
Then he drew back, as if half-overawed
Before that fearless mien. But baffled rage
Urged him to desperation and he cried :
" Now by the living God, I thee adjure ;
Tell us if thou be Christ, the Son of God ? "

The Story of the Twelve

SIMON ZELOTES

'Twas as I surely thought. He ne'er could 'scape
Such challenge, since that day He did accept
The "Hail Messiah!" of the multitude.
But how then answer'd He?

JOHN

As one who turns
The question in the mouth of him who asks,
To its own answer; and transmutes its scorn
To unintended honour. Thus He spake:
"If I should tell you, ye will not believe:
And if I ask you, ye will answer not.
Yet is it as ye say."

SIMON ZELOTES

And yet if He
Were truly the Messiah!—wherefore now
Lies He as mortal man for ever dead
In yonder tomb? Didst thou not see Him die,
O son of Zebedee?

JOHN

Ah, would to God
That I might doubt it! And yet woe is me;
For scarce I less may doubt that He who stood
'Fore Caiaphas and Pilate, but this morn,
Was *That* He claim'd to be. But Caiaphas,
Rending his robe, upsprang and cried aloud,
"Ye all have heard the blasphemy he speaks.
What need for further witness? What think ye?"
Then o'er the tumult rose the answering shout—

The Great Tragedy

“ Guilty is he of death ! Away with him
To Pilate’s court ! ”

JAMES

Yea, truly Caiaphas
Had acted well his part. Yet blasphemy
Was naught, in sooth, to him ; so he had gain’d
The end he long had sought !

JOHN

In very truth,
Malignant joy was ill-conceal’d beneath
The High Priest’s righteous horror ! and he left
His judgment seat as one who had prevail’d
Against his enemy. And ye may judge
Of how the law was kept by Caiaphas,
In that which happen’d then. The Temple guard
And palace underlings had gauged full well
The spirit of their masters. Brutal jest
And mockery now follow’d ; and they ask’d,
While smiting Him blindfolded, “ Prophecy,
Thou Christ : who smiteth thee ! ”

And some there were,
E’en of the Council, who themselves now shared
The shameful deed : and foremost amongst these
Were seen the sons of Annas !

SIMON ZELOTES

Infamous !

Ay, sons of Belial, and worthy brood
Of such a sire ! Of this shall Annas hear,
And Caiaphas.

The Story of the Twelve

MATTHEW

Mayhap they e'en have heard
What rumour whisper'd of that parable
The Master spake, of the rich man in hell :
Who, seeing the scorn'd beggar at his gate,
In Abram's bosom, begg'd that warning go
To his five brethren. For it hath been said
That unto Annas did such words apply,
And to his shameless sons, and Caiaphas
His son-in-law !

NATHANAEL

Truly our Priestly House
Savours of ill-repute. And woe betide
The nation, when its rulers are despised.
Said Jesus aught of this ?

JOHN

No bitter word
Fell from His lips. But with calm dignity
He bore their savage scorn, until no more
I could endure to see. Then I went forth,
And waited till they led Him, bound with cords,
Unto the court of Pilate.

PHILIP

Yet tell all
Thou canst, of how the Nazarene did fare
Before the Governor. But stay—canst tell
What happen'd unto Judas ?

The Great Tragedy

JOHN

He was there,
Yet as a tool, which, having done its work,
The craftsman casts aside : and injured pride
And vanity betray'd themselves in looks
Of sullen ill-content, as restlessly
He wander'd to and fro. But as to him,
I will speak more anon. Of Pilate now
I fain would tell—O most unhappy man !

SIMON ZELOTES

Unhappy ?—He, the Governor of Judæa,
Who holds our race in such contemptuous scorn !
Doth he not joy in the abuse of power
He wields at Cæsar's hands ? Now hath he crown'd
His infamies, in that he set his seal
To such foul wrong this day !

JOHN

Yet even so
Was he persuaded, sore against his will,
Thro' grievous cowardice. But I avow
That never saw I one who show'd less joy
In that he did : or more distraught in mind,
Than he from whom at last was wrung assent
Unto the death of Jesus !

When at first
He faced the clamorous crowd within the court,
His glance, methought, with wondering pity fell
On the pale Nazarene. Then, with a look
Of petulant disdain, he turn'd and ask'd

The Story of the Twelve

Whereof they would accuse Him. Caiaphas
Answer'd : " We had not brought him unto thee ;
Saving for great offence." And, as one glad
To free himself from trouble, Pilate said :
" Concerning these disputes among yourselves,
Ye have your jurisdiction. Judge ye him
According to your law." " Nay," one replied,
" 'Tis thine to judge a troubler of the State,
Who calls himself a King ; and doth pervert
Our nation, e'en forbidding us to pay
Tribute to Cæsar."

JAMES

May the lying mouth
Of him who bare false witness be struck dumb !
The Master spake not so to those who ask'd
Concerning Cæsar's tribute.

JOHN

Of a truth :
But Pilate at such words was greatly moved,
And bade them take forth Jesus unto him
Awhile in the Prætorium. I also
Went thither ; for this day an officer,
Of high authority in Pilate's court,
So favour'd me in pity, that I saw
All that befell the Master. And thro' all
With courtesy did Pilate bear himself
Towards his prisoner, whose dignity
Seem'd greatly to impress him.

" Tell me now,"
He ask'd, " dost thou, indeed, proclaim thyself

The Great Tragedy

King of the Jews ? ” Then marvell’d those around,
That one in bonds should answer thus his judge :
“ Of thyself, askest thou, or hast thou heard
From others—this of me ? ” In more amaze
Than anger, Pilate said : “ Am I a Jew,
To know of such things ? Thou art charged to me
By thine own nation ; and I seek to learn
Alone what thou hast done.” Jesus replied :
“ Know then, my Kingdom is not of this world :
Else would my servants fight, that to the Jews
I should not be deliver’d.”

NATHANAEL

To the face
Of Pilate spake He thus ? Who could so speak
And at such time, save He that knew it true !
How answer’d Pilate then ?

JOHN

He gazed as one
Who did mistrust his ears, and wonderingly
Ask’d, “ Art thou then a King ? ” Ere He replied,
The Master paused as one who weighs his words :—
“ Thou sayest it. To this end was I born,
And came I to bear witness in the world
Unto the truth.”

Full long did Pilate look
Upon Him—yet as if he saw Him not.
Then mutter’d as one lost in reverie,
“ Truth ! What is truth ? ” And then he seem’d to
start
As doth a dreamer waken’d from his sleep,

The Story of the Twelve

At sound of his own voice. On Him who stood
Before him there, he turn'd a piercing gaze,
As if to question further. Then again
His purpose waver'd, and with backward glance
Of awed amazement, he went quickly forth
Unto the outer court.

A clamorous shout
Of threatening anger rose when he declared,
"I find no fault in him." And yet again
They cried out, that from Galilee He came,
Stirring sedition throughout all Judæa.
When Pilate heard He came from Galilee,
In Herod's jurisdiction, eagerly
He thought to free himself, and bade them take
Jesus to Antipas.

JAMES

And said He aught
Unto the Tetrarch of the Baptist's death,
When face to face they met? Foul murderer!—
Did he not gloat to find how fortune play'd
Into his bloody hands, when Jesus stood
Also within his power?

JOHN

Not a word
Spake either of the Baptist. At the first
Herod betray'd his joy that now at length
He saw the Nazarene. Then mockingly
Bade Him, of whom such wondrous things were told,
Perform some miracle. But Jesus deign'd
Him not a single word! And, stung at last

The Great Tragedy

By such disdain before his courtiers shown,
His wit to malice turn'd. The vengeful scribes
Still urged their cry, "He claims to be a King!"
So Herod, flattering their servile taunt,
Yielded Him to the sport of soldiery,
Who clad Him gorgeously, and bow'd the knee
In mocking homage to Him. Thus he sent
Him back again to Pilate.

NATHANAEL

Woe to think
That One so gentle should endure such scorn :
And stranger still that One with so great power
All unresisting bore it ! Was it so
Even unto the last ?

MATTHEW

Ay, it were well
That, some day, record of such things as these
Be writ concerning Him.

JOHN

Now scenes and words
Are burn'd within my brain ; and some relief
It is to speak of them. Yet I would haste
Unto the dreadful end. E'en to the last—
As one, some noble quarry of the chase
Would save from fangs relentless—so, in truth,
Sought Pilate to save Jesus from the hands
Of His fierce enemies. But yet, alas,
Tho' fearing his own conscience, fear'd he more
The malice of the Priests !

The Story of the Twelve

When now at length
He order'd that the prisoner be scourged
And then released, a cry was backward flung,
"Observest thou the custom of the feast?"
This, Pilate seized on, and gave answer back:
"Ye have the right at Passover to claim
One prisoner's release. Shall I not then
Release your King?" But paler grew his face
Before the angry shout, "Nay, not this man.
Release to us Barabbas." And still more
Was he disturb'd; for at that moment came
A message borne by one from Pilate's wife,
Procla, the good and fair.

JOHN MARK

'Tis said of late,
That she hath shown much favour unto those
Within the palace who are known to be
The followers of Jesus. Such an one
Told me this day that, when at morn she woke,
After much-troubled sleep, she straightly ask'd,
If even then the Nazarene stood not
Arraign'd before her lord! On hearing all,
Greatly distress'd, she sent to Pilate word:
"Beware what doest thou to that just man:
For I have suffer'd many things this day,
In dream, because of him."

JOHN

Full well I knew
The message was of moment: for then care

The Great Tragedy

Deepen'd on Pilate's brow. And when he turn'd
Again unto the crowd, he cried as one
To desperation driven : " Do ye take heed
Of that ye say ? What shall I do with him
Who is call'd Christ ? " And back their answer came,
" Let him be crucified ! " With ringing scorn
Then ask'd he, " Why, what evil hath he done ?
I therefore will chastise him, and release."
So order'd he the soldiers. When again
They brought Him back—Oh, in what woeful guise
Did He appear ! Yet, spite of purple robe,
A crown of twisted thorn, and sceptre reed,
There sat such regal dignity on Him,
As seem'd to scorn their scorn, who mocking cried,
" King of the Jews, all hail ! " When Pilate saw,
For very pity fell there from his lips
The words, " Behold the man ! " But yet again,
And more persistently arose the shout,
" The Cross ! The Cross ! " Thereat, in wild
despair,
He cried, " Take him yourselves, and crucify :
I find no fault in him." But one declared :
" We also have a law, and by that law
He ought to die, because he made himself
The Son of God." When Pilate heard these words
New-startled fear look'd forth from out his eyes
Upon the face of Jesus, whom once more
He bade them take within.

With whisper'd awe,
He ask'd Him then : " What meaneth this new
charge

The Story of the Twelve

They bring against thee? Whence, indeed, art thou? "

But when He answer'd nothing, Pilate urged,
Yet with a pleading sternness: " Speakest thou
Not unto me? Dost know I have the power
E'en to release thee, or to crucify? "

Then answer'd He at last: " Thou hast no power
Against me, save 'twere given thee from above:
Therefore he that deliver'd me to thee
Hath greater sin." At such strange words as these,
Pilate gazed long and silently at Him
In baffled wonderment. But, when return'd
Unto the court again, 'twas manifest
He still would fain save Jesus. Yet he scarce
Had oped his lips to speak, when harsh there rang
The bitter taunt: " If thou release this man,
Thou art not Cæsar's friend: for every one
That makes himself a King, 'gainst Cæsar speaks."
And 'twas a well-spiced bolt; for Pilate then
Was seen to falter: and at further shafts
Of threatening challenge, yielded he at last,
And took his judgment seat.

Yet once again,
When Jesus stood before him, did he turn
At their relentless clamour, and cried back
With shaming irony, " Behold your King! "
But still the more their frenzied cry arose,
" Away, and crucify him! " Pilate then,
With finger pointing to that bowèd form—
Silent, apart, as if unheeding all—
Ask'd them in words aquiver with his scorn,

The Great Tragedy

“What! crucify your King?” Then the Chief
Priests

Led on the answering shout, with one accord,

“We have no King but Cæsar!”

SIMON ZELOTES

From their lips

Came such a cry? Base hypocrites!—or else
Forswearers of Messiah! Craftily
They drew the net for Pilate, who well knows
What happ'd when votive shields he yonder hung
In Herod's palace. For when Sanhedrin
Appeal'd unto Tiberius, it is said,
The Emperor's displeasure was a thing
Pilate might not twice suffer!

JOHN

'Twas a charge

He least of all might dare: e'en for the sake
Of One for whom, methinks, he had dared all—
Save that alone! So seem'd to fall on him
The utter weariness of thwarted hope,
As louder grew the tumult. Then as one
Who loathed the thing he did, he bade them bring
Water forthwith; and as he wash'd his hands,
Cried, with appealing gestures of despair;
“See ye to it: for I am innocent
The blood of this just man.” Then answer'd they,
“On us and on our children, be his blood.”
In helpless pity, Pilate look'd once more
Upon the Nazarene. With halting words

The Story of the Twelve

And with forced calm, then order'd he the guard
With Valgus, the Centurion, to release
Barabbas straightway ; and lead Jesus forth
E'en to be crucified !

Oh, woe is me,
That I beheld such things !

NATHANAEL

And added woe
Is ours for aye : remembering that we shared
Thy vigil not ; nor any comfort yield
In such an anguish'd hour !

PHILIP

How strange a fate !—
That our belovèd Lord, who held aloof
From all politic strife, should fall at last
Its victim—innocent ! Canst tell us now,
O son of Zebedee, concerning him,
Judas the Keriote, whose name henceforth
Accursèd be, as “ traitor ” ?

JOHN

To and fro
He ever paced the court : and swift his face
Betray'd each changing mood, as hung the while,
His Master's fate in balance. But his pride
Seem'd mortified, as if he thought to play
A more conspicuous part ; and he appear'd
As one held there, unwilling, by some power
He could not well resist. His furtive glance

The Great Tragedy

Still ever and anon would scan the face
Of Him he had betray'd : and in that look
Was strangely intermingled cunning greed,
With sense of inward terror. Then a change
Pass'd o'er him.—And lo, 'neath those sullen brows,
'Twas surely hope that lurk'd, at Pilate's will
To free the Nazarene—and surely thence
Departed, as he mark'd the awful doom
Which ever nearer drew ! 'Tis hard to say
What mingling passions sway'd him. But, in
sooth,

When unto Pilate's taunt, the answer came :
“ We have no King but Cæsar,” I had thought
Judas would cry aloud, so framed his lips
As if for utterance ! And I aver,
The very soul of human misery
Look'd out his face, when Pilate at the last
Bade Jesus forth to die. Then suddenly
I saw the Master raise His eyes and look
Full steadily at Judas.—And therein
Lay such reproach, yet wistful tenderness,
As he could not endure ; but turn'd therefrom,
All haggard with despair ! A moment's pause :
Then drawing close his cloak—as one on whom
A deathly chill hath struck—he, stumbling, pass'd
From out the Judgment Hall. . . .

NATHANAEL

And e'en as Cain—
Surely henceforth the brand of murderer
Shall mark him from his fellows ! Now let be.

The Story of the Twelve

He passeth to the silence of those things
The mind would fain forget. But of the Lord !—
Still would we hear, if thou canst bear to tell
All else that happ'd to Him this woeful day,
Unto the very last.

JOHN

I so will tell :

Tho' all the awful wonder of His death,
Words may but vainly speak. Slowly we pass'd
From the Prætorium—a clamorous crowd,
In midst of which He seem'd, of all, most calm
In mind and mien ; while many gave applause
To the Chief Priests and scribes. Yet not so, all.
For scowling Galilæans gather'd round
With threatening gestures ; and one, taunting, cried :
“ Woe unto you, ye scribes and Pharisees,
Ay, hypocrites ! Who, straining out the gnat,
Swallow the camel.” And thereon arose
Such angry mock, that Valgus bade his guard
Look well unto their duty, urged thereto
By the uneasy elders.

SIMON ZELOTES

Yea, I trow

Those words will not be speedily forgot
He spake within the Temple ! 'Twas a stroke
Which fell upon the ears of some, methinks,
Sharply as Peter's sword fell on the ear
Of Malchus yesternight ! Was no attempt
Made to release Him ?

The Great Tragedy

JOHN

Any such had been
But worse than useless ; and I am assured
He had forbidden it. His thoughts, as aye,
Were turn'd to others' woes ; and spake He words
Of comfort unto women who drew near
With sorrowing sympathy. So He bore on
His heavy cross ; till one among the crowd,
Cried, " See, he falls ! " And Valgus answer'd him,
" Thou art a sturdy knave. Wilt bear his cross
For him, thyself ? " " That will I," he replied ;
And on the brawny shoulders of him, known
As Simon, the Cyrenian, was the cross
Thence borne with seeming pride.

At Calvary

They crucified Him ; and on either side
A malefactor hung ! When the Chief Priests
Read Pilate's title writ above the cross,
" Jesus of Nazareth : King of the Jews " ;
They begg'd him alter it. But Pilate then
Would brook no change, and scornful answer made :
" What I have written I have written.—Go ! "

My God !—

How may I tell of that sore vigil spent
Beneath the cross on which the Master hung
In such long mortal anguish ! All did seem
As some horrific dream which trick'd the brain
With phantasies of woe ; while yet, alas,
I knew no waking would e'er come to prove
They were but phantasies. A stricken hush
Fell upon most : but some e'en then reviled

The Story of the Twelve

With brutal taunt : " Lo, thou who wouldst
destroy
The Temple, and rebuild it in three days :
Now save thyself ! " But they were put to shame,
And by none less than one of those who hung
Beside Him there. For when his fellow cried,
" Ay, save thyself and us ! "—all were amazed
At his rebuke : " Peace, fool ! Dost not fear God ?
We suffer justly : but this man hath done
Nothing amiss." Then turning unto Him
Who hung between, he pled with reverence,
" Jesus, remember me when thou art come
Into thy Kingdom." And in the great awe
Which silenced all, He answer'd, " Verily
I say to thee, that thou shalt be with me
To-day in Paradise."

PHILIP

In Paradise ?

The while He suffer'd ignominious death !
And to a malefactor ? Art thou sure
Thou heardest Him aright ?

JOHN

Nay, none might doubt
Of words that fell midst so profound a hush
As then prevail'd. And Nature e'en conspired
To mark their utterance : for stormful clouds,
Which long had threaten'd, now o'erspread the sky
With sultry gloom ; as if from such a scene
The sun would hide his face ! So darkness fell

The Great Tragedy

Mid cries of stricken terror ; for none knew
What further sign impended. Then it was
Our woeful company yet nearer drew
And knelt beneath His cross. There Mary wept
And wail'd her dying son ; and there also
Were Mary Magdalene, and she the wife
Of Clopas, and the others. Then He spake,
As comforting His mother : “ Woman, lo,
Behold thy son ! ” And as mine upraised eyes
Met His, in mute enquiry, came His words :
“ Behold, thy mother ! ” Then I doubted not
What meant He ; and I drew her grief-bow'd form
Unto myself. He saw ! And on His lips,
With anguish parch'd, a wan smile came—and
went.

Again deep silence fell ; save for the tramp
Of the Centurion's guard, which to and fro
Paced with subdued demean. But suddenly
A cry arose, awful in its despair,
“ Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani ? ”
Some thought He call'd Elias, and in awe
Awaited what might hap. But when He said,
“ I thirst,” a soldier ran and with a sponge
On lifted reed, gave unto Him to drink.
Ah, ne'er did pity such reward receive,
As was bestow'd by grateful glance that bless'd
Him who then show'd it ! A moment more,
And loud He cried, “ Father, into Thy hands
I now commend my spirit.” Then with words,
Low-breathing, “ It is finished ”—bow'd His head,
And yielded up the ghost !

The Story of the Twelve

And thereupon
The very earth did seem to reel, as struck
By some stupendous woe ! for there was that
E'en in His death, as in His life, which pass'd
Human experience. And there arose
On every hand loud cries of terror, blent
With wails and lamentations. Midst such scenes,
E'en were the Roman soldiery dismay'd ;
And Valgus cried, awe-stricken, " Of a truth
This was the Son of God ! "

From Calvary
The multitude with silent fear return'd :
While we yet linger'd there with our beloved,
Amid the hush of death. Thus wondering
What best were done, since Sabbath drew anear,
Lo, then sped back from Pilate, with their news,
Joseph and Nicodemus. They had craved
The Master's body for meet burial ;
And he had granted it.

SIMON ZELOTES

'Twas bravely done !
For they are like to court disfavour now
Within the Sanhedrin.

JAMES

Nor lack'd they aught
Of courage, who could face the Governor
With such request as this !

JOHN

And readily
Did Valgus also hasten to obey

The Great Tragedy

The Procurator's warrant. Thus was borne
The body of the Lord to Joseph's tomb,
Nigh unto Calvary. There lack'd He naught
Of such fit sepulchre as loving hands
Could well supply ; for even myrrh and spice
Had Nicodemus brought. So left we Him
With cover'd face, whereon had each long look'd
Ere from our eyes 'twas veil'd for evermore.
Dead ! Yet I scarce could think it—who, indeed,
Had seen Him die—and on the cross, in sooth,
Which none endure, and live ! Nay, but almost
I could have sworn He did but sleep, and dream
A pleasant dream—so wondrous calm He look'd :
Ay, as majestic as if lurk'd within
Those death-closed eyes some sense of triumph won ;
Whereof the secret trembled on those lips
Which were for ever seal'd !

Yet is He dead,
And I but babble e'en as one distraught
With foolish fancies, which a weary brain
Doth conjure from its sorrow. 'Tis enough,
I can no more. Surely it groweth late !
Where tarries Simon Peter, and also
Andrew and Didymus ? God grant no ill
This night hath fallen on them !

PHILIP

Rest thee now,
As thou dost sorely need ; who for our sakes
Hast lived twice o'er the terrors of this day,
In thus recounting them. And now, alas,

The Story of the Twelve

Since He is dead—whom we had surely thought
To be Messiah !—what remains for us ?
But of these things anon. Dangers yet threat,
Since we are known to all as followers
Of the slain Nazarene. The City still
Seems strangely clamorous ! . . .

JAMES

Yea, even now

Methought I heard a knocking at the gate.
Didst thou hear aught, John Mark ?

JOHN MARK

Somewhat I heard

A while ago ; but listening, heard no more :
Yet hark ! . . . 'tis so again, and I will go
And make the matter sure.

*[He goes to the outer gate, and presently returns
with Andrew.]*

JOHN

What ! Andrew, thou !

Glad am I thou hast come. But not alone
Thou surely art ? Dost any tidings bring
Of thine own brother ?

ANDREW

Simon is without,

O son of Zebedee. And I would beg
Thou wilt persuade him enter ; for he shrinks
As one who doubts his welcome ; and despair
Afflicts him grievously.

The Great Tragedy

JOHN

What sayest thou ?
He shall not wait for welcome !

SIMON ZELOTES

Nay, forsooth !

*[He goes out and leads in Simon Peter,
who is evidently reluctant to enter with him.]*

(CHORUS OF VOICES)

Peace to thee—

Simon Bar-Jona !

SIMON PETER

Stay ! Ye have not heard
Of my base treachery ?

SIMON ZELOTES

Thy treachery ?

Thou art beside thyself ! Tho' we have naught
To boast ourselves this day—save only John :
Yet one alone—Judas the Keriote—
Deserves the name of “ traitor ” !

JAMES

As for thee,

Thine only was the sword that smote this morn
At Malchus, ere we fled ! Now John hath told
How thou didst follow also to the court
Of Caiaphas—till thou couldst bear no more ;
And went forth suddenly.

SIMON PETER

Didst tell thee, why . . . ?

The Story of the Twelve

But ere of that I speak, I first would tell
Of yet another at Gethsemane :
One, who aroused from sleep, had thither sped
All lightly garmented. His linen robe
Was rent by staying hands : but as in flight
He pass'd me by, I look'd upon his face—
And lo, it was John Mark !

JOHN MARK

It shameth me,
That thou shouldst speak of such a thing as this,
I thought unknown by any. 'Twas but naught.
When yesternight ye left my upper room,
I slept not—so the Master's face did haunt
My troubled mind. And when I heard the tread
Of passing soldiery, I felt assured
Some danger threaten'd Him, and follow'd fast,
Thinking to warn thereof. Too late I came,
And fled in sudden fear, as now ye know.

SIMON ZELOTES

Say as thou wilt : but it was bravely done
That thou shouldst come at all, knowing right well
Some evil was astir !

SIMON PETER

Bravely ! In truth
Ye all are brave, who have not dealt this day
In craven treachery ! Again I ask,
If John hath told ye why I fled in haste
The High Priest's palace . . . ?

The Great Tragedy

Hearken then to me !—

I went forth shamed, with curse upon my soul ;
For I had thrice denied my blessed Lord,
As He full warning gave !

While in the court

I sat midst others round the kindled hearth,
A certain damsel—she who kept the gate—
Long looking at me, ask'd, “ Art thou not, too,
One of this man's disciples ? ” Then, afraid,
I answer'd, “ I am not.” . . .

After awhile

She brought with her another, who likewise
Averr'd before them all : “ This man also
Was with the Nazarene.” And woe is me !—
For from my perjured heart there sprang the words
Of everlasting shame unto my lips :
“ I do not know the man.” . . .

Then at the last

Spake one, kinsman of Malchus, and he ask'd,
“ Did I not see thee, of a truth, with him
In yonder garden ? ” And another said :
“ Belike this fellow was : for by his speech
He is a Galilæan.” And thereat,
Anger'd and fearful, I denied again ;
Ay, e'en with oaths swore, “ I know not the man
Of whom ye speak.” . . . And ere my traitorous
tongue

Had ceased—lo, on my startled ears there fell
The sudden crow of cock ! while thro' the court
They led the Master back. He turn'd and look'd
Upon me ! Then He pass'd.—And, as a flood,

The Story of the Twelve

Remembrance of His word at Passover
Swept o'er my stricken soul :—" I say to thee,
Ere the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." . . .
Ah, God ! That look ! The eye can speak such
things

As ne'er the lips may utter. So there came,
In that one look, such tender wistfulness,
As heal'd, the while it wounded ! Such sad grief,
As more than anger, smote ! And love withal,
So graciously forgiving—that my heart
Had surely broken, had I not gone forth
And wept so bitterly ! . . .

JOHN

Yet by thy tears,
Simon, thou didst more truly show thyself
Than by such gusty words as 'scaped thy lips
In an unguarded moment.

SIMON PETER

Nay, but mark
How at His warning words, I had replied :
" Tho' all men should betray Thee—yet not I ! "
And now most cravenly have I this day
Three times denied Him ! And the bitterness
Was in that moment when His look recall'd
My love unto itself. Yea, I had struck
That man unto the ground, who had denied
That still I loved the Master ! But, for shame,
I could no other than go forth and weep
For this my treachery. . . .

The Great Tragedy

SIMON ZELOTES

Yet overmuch
Dost thou accuse thyself. For treachery !—
That lieth only at the door of one,
Judas the Keriote.

JOHN

And for thy sake,
Now Simon, son of Jona, will I tell
What hath not yet been told. 'Tis known to all
Judas betray'd his Lord : yet know ye not
The price of His betrayal. Unto me
'Twas told by Nicodemus, who had heard
Thereof this noon, that unto the Chief Priests
Judas betray'd his Master for the sum
Of thirty silver shekels !

PHILIP

Sayest thou,
For thirty shekels Judas sold his Lord ?—
The very price of slave !

JAMES

Now, by my troth,
So foul a thing as this hath ne'er been done ;
And, in compare, the fear and cowardice
We show'd this day, doth surely 'fore high Heaven
Weigh lightly in the balance !

SIMON PETER

He who counts
Evil or small or great—apportioning

The Story of the Twelve

Its measured tithe to each—must needs first weigh
What motive prompts ; what subtlety ensnares
Each heart to its undoing ; and thereto
Also adjust such measure of remorse
As each lays on itself !

I know, alas,
What Judas did.—And, as I live, 'twas base !
Yet basely, too, my Lord I thrice denied.
Who then am I to mete the measure out,
Of baseness—mine or his ? More is herein
Than thirty counted shekels ! I but wept
For mine own baseness. Do ye know what he,
Judas, hath done for his ? . . .

Hark then to this,
Which Andrew will confirm. Hither we came
After much aimless wandering, sore distraught :
And as the darkness fell, betook our way
Hard by the potter's field, which lieth nigh
Unto the Hinnom valley. And from thence
It chanced that some were bearing a rough bier,
On which a form lay silent and outstretch'd
Beneath a draggled cloak. As close they pass'd,
The light of swaying lantern suddenly
Flash'd on the tangled tawny hair of him
Who lay so motionless. Then was I seized
With horror, for I knew him !—and with cry,
That brought the band to halt, I reach'd and drew
The cloak from off his face : and lo, in truth,
It was the face of Judas ! Ah, my God !—
A face thrice terrible with death, and woe,
And madness of despair ! Then I beheld

The Great Tragedy

That from his neck a broken strand of cord
Betray'd his awful end !

JAMES

Oh, horrible !
In sooth, most horrible !

ANDREW

Yet is it true,
As Simon hath recounted.

MATTHEW

Our fierce wrath
Against his treachery, he did exceed
Himself, by yet a fiercer !

JOHN

Such a fate—
So swift, so awful, little deem'd I of,
When Judas last I saw as he withdrew
From Pilate's court this morn. Yet there was that
Within his face, which almost had foretold
E'en such despair as this !

NATHANAEL

But to what end
Was his betrayal of the Master thus,
If such remorse so swiftly overtook
Achievement of his purpose ?

The Story of the Twelve

SIMON PETER

It is there
The mystery doth lie. And I have more
To tell concerning Judas : as I learnt
Thereafter by enquiry.

They had found
His lifeless body fall'n beneath the tree
Whereon he hang'd himself. Then others came
At the quick-spreading news, and one there was,
Straightway discern'd him as the self-same man
He saw at noon rush forth in frenzied haste
From out the court of Priests. He, standing
near,
O'erheard high voices as of those who waged
Some hot dispute within. One cried at last,
As in despair, " Take back this cursèd bribe
For which, alas, I sold Him ! I have sinn'd,
Who have betray'd blood innocent." There came
The answer back, " What is that unto us ?
See thou to it." Then was there heard the cry
Of one in pain and wrath ; and the clear ring
Of money flung upon the marble floor.
And then strode forth this man, concerning whom
The stranger held no doubt ; so had his face
Since haunted him with terror. Verily,
'Twas none but Judas—slain by his own hand—
Whom there we look'd upon !

JOHN

Then it would seem,
Immediately he heard his Lord condemn'd,

The Great Tragedy

He did repent himself, and sought forthwith
Annulment of his bargain.

SIMON ZELOTES

More is here—

As Simon Peter saith—than we may count
By thirty shekels. And far greater stake
Did Judas surely hazard when he sold
His Master to the Priests ! Nay, in sore truth,
Spake I not these suspicions two days since,
When certain rumours reach'd us ? It must be
That, by this awful venture, Judas thought
To haste his Master's glory by such pass
As he had brought Him to :—when e'en perforce
He must declare Himself ; or else be proved
As other than He claim'd !

JAMES

But the Chief Priests
Shared not that ventured hope. And, whatsoe'er
They did profess to Judas, 'tis most clear
They used him but as tool wherewith to work
Their own long-cherish'd hate.

PHILIP

And unto him

E'en thirty shekels were a worthy prize,
Had he but come to think the Nazarene
Might fail him in the end !

NATHANAEL

Yet, even so,
How vastly he misjudged ! For as he clutch'd

The Story of the Twelve

The shekels to his bosom ; each did turn
Unto a poison'd adder, and their sting
Had slain the soul within him, ere he hang'd
His body on the tree !

SIMON PETER

Misjudged himself !
Yea, as we all misjudge—the more or less—
Each in his fateful measure. Knew he not
Full well the risk of death to Him betray'd
When he the shekels took ? Ah, but he felt
So sure the Nazarene would use at need
The wondrous power He held ! Yet when he found
He had o'er-reach'd himself :—it matter'd less
That Jesus had not proved Messiah then ;
Than that he, Judas, had betray'd to death
One who had trusted him. It was that thought
He could not think—and live !

And what, alas,
Is left to any here, since He is gone ?
Doth it console us now to know He fail'd
To prove Himself Messiah ? Who was this,
Who, as a light from Heaven, illumed our way
So brief a time : and yet reveal'd therein
An age of marvels ? Whence did He so come ;
And whither hath He gone ? leaving us now
Eclipsed in deeper darkness—that He shone
So radiantly awhile ! Is it not thus,
O son of Zebedee ? We fain would hear,
Ere we depart, what counsel thou canst give
Against the morrow's needs.

The Great Tragedy

JOHN

Not unto me

'Tis given to lay bare the mysteries
This awful day hath hid. And of the thoughts
Which sway'd the mind of Judas to such ends,
We ne'er may know : since now the secret lies
Beyond his power to tell—or ours to hear.
It is enough to know that those false lips,
Which so betray'd the Master with a kiss !—
Have pledged eternal silence. In that act,
Whereby he show'd no mercy on himself,
Doth he not crave our mercy ? As for us :
Truly it seems our star of Hope hath set ;
And midst the storm so swift and terrible,
Our hearts cry out in fear. . . .

ANDREW

Even as once,

When yet He heard our cry in the wild night,
And still'd the tempest's rage upon the lake !
'Tis of such things, so fraught with power Divine,
I ask me if we dream'd them—since He now
Like any mortal died. Yet God forgive
These treacherous doubts of One whose mighty
works

Our eyes have truly seen ! Yea, over death
Itself, He held dominion ! And we judged
His fears but idle when He spake as one
Destined to suffer death. Deem me not rash,
Or foolish overmuch, if sorrow now
In its despair should snatch from out my heart

The Story of the Twelve

A desperate courage. Shall our memory
Not cling to *all* His words, tho' it seem mock'd
By too vain task this day ? 'Tis bitter-sweet—
Yet is it sweet enough—since naught beside
Remains, save memory. So I recall,
How when He prophesied that He should die,
He also said that He would rise again
After three days ! Alas, that e'en of Him
The lips may dare repeat what yet the mind
Dareth not to believe ! But it was He !—
And not another spake it. And of Him !—
O brethren, who may tell . . . ?

JOHN

Now art thou bold,
Andrew, beyond us all, since thou canst dare
Such questionings as our own faltering lips
Fear from our hearts to wrest. Who may forget
That saying of the Master ? Yet, who sound,
With plummet of His thought, the depth thereof ?
While yet He lived, our souls were held in thrall
By revelation of such things as ne'er
We dream'd of, till He came. But it was life
And power in Him alone which drew our hope
To aught beyond the bounds of human sense !
Am I then faithless—who am but a man—
If I should ask what now remains, since He
Hath ceased of life and power ? I know not well :
But pray that love may make the measure good,
Where faith falls short : for all wherein I loved—
I love Him still. But all wherein I thought

The Great Tragedy

He could not die,—Ah, God ! what shall I say,
Now He is surely dead ? We have seen One,
And One alone, who raised the dead to life ;
And He it was mine eyes beheld this day
Die on the shameful cross ! And in the tomb
These hands His body laid ! . . .

But did'st thou say,
O Simon, that our night were darker now
For very radiance of the light which once
He shed upon our pathway ? Nay, not so.
For He hath left enshrined within our hearts
A vision of such beauteous grace and truth,
As else we ne'er had seen ! And verily,
In naught did He deceive us ; for He warn'd
That woe and tribulation surely came ;
And yet we heeded not. But now return
His words of comfort, making music sweet,
E'en in the heart of sorrow. Said He not,
But yestereve : “ My peace I leave with you ”—
As if foreseeing all ! Yet of these things
I speak not longer now. In calmer mood
We will recall them ; and together weave
The story of that wondrous life once lived
Among us here. Then, too, shall all men know
Such things as ne'er were told, save but of
One,
Jesus the Nazarene !

MATTHEW

I have writ much
Concerning Him already : and from now

The Story of the Twelve

Shall my poor skill but serve to herald forth
The glory of His name.

JOHN

So may it be.
And now, until the morrow, let us seek
Such respite as we may, from this day's woes,
In self-forgetful sleep.

SIMON ZELOTES

We go, indeed,
As those who know not whither : for our hope
In the swift coming of Messiah's reign
Now lieth stricken unto death with Him
Who lies in Joseph's tomb.

ANDREW

Yet love abides,
Which not e'en death may slay !

JAMES

Yea, love still lives !
God grant that henceforth, as the bond which binds
Our spirits unto His, so may it bind
Our own sad hearts the closer.

JOHN

Hath no word
Yet come of Didymus ?

The Great Tragedy

PHILIP

No word hath come.
And none have seen him since at morn he fled
Gethsemane with us.

JOHN

Yet there is none
On whom this woe falls heavier ! I could wish
He had been with us ; for despondency
Grows much of late upon him, and I fear
For such despair as his. Peace unto him,
And comfort, as he surely needs this night,
Where'er he be !

And now may grace and peace
Be unto you, my brethren !

(OTHERS)

And to thee !

BOOK VIII

MORS JANUA VITÆ

SCENE.—*The house of John Mark in Jerusalem.*

TIME.—*The evening of the eighth day after the Resurrection of Jesus.*

PRESENT.—*The Eleven Disciples.*

THOMAS

'Tis such a thing
As ne'er was heard of man ; and far exceeds
Imagination's reach ! Then thinkest thou,
O son of Zebedee, it should suffice
To be believed ;—in that 'tis marvellous
Beyond belief ? Nay, for that very cause,
The mind doth halt thereat.

JOHN

Yet hath He shown
Ofttimes such power before, as did confound
Reason and will alike in those who saw !
He lives ! I vow to thee, He lives again,
Jesus, our Lord and Master ! Dost thou doubt
Thy brethren's word, O Didymus—that here

Mors Janua Vitæ

Within this very room, but eight days since
He re-appear'd to us ? 'Tis true He came
In strange and mystic guise :—for suddenly,
Despite the bolted door, it seem'd as if
Some subtle Power, unseen but felt, had breathed
As wind upon us, and—I know not how—
But lo, before our fearful gaze there stood
The very Lord Himself ! And on our ears
Fell His familiar greeting : “ Peace to you ! ”
Yet fear our senses mock'd ; and some cried out
As those who saw a spirit : for had none
Save Simon Peter seen Him, and the twain
Who with amazing tidings had return'd
All breathless from Emmaus. But He calm'd
And chid our fears, and said : “ See, it is I
Myself, and not a spirit ye behold.
Yea, touch me if ye will.” And then we saw
Upon His hands and feet the print of nails !
And doubt was turn'd to such tumultuous joy,
As fain would doubt itself ! 'Twas then He show'd
How all these happenings had but fulfill'd
Our Scriptures ; and that it behoved the Christ
To die and rise again. And thereupon
He charged us to go forth and preach to all
Repentance in His name. We were o'erwhelm'd
With all the wonder of it : and I then
Had ask'd Him more thereof. But so He made
As if to bless us—that we bow'd in awe
Beneath His outstretch'd hands, and heard His
words :

“ Receive the Holy Ghost ! To them whose sins

The Story of the Twelve

Ye pardon, they are pardon'd : or retain,
They are retain'd." And then He seem'd to breathe
A gentle breath upon us, as before ;
And, lifting up our eyes, we saw Him not,
For lo, He vanish'd strangely, as He came !
Yet, Didymus, thou dost deny He rose—
Since doubttest thou our word ! Ah, would that thou
Hadst been with us that even !

THOMAS

Chide me not,
Good son of Zebedee, as one who lacks
The will to so believe ; or doubts in aught,
That any here full well believe such things
As thou hast now averr'd. For dost thou deem
My love to Him were less ? Nay, 'tis my love,
So sore bereft, that may not dare a hope—
Unproved by sight—lest proving but in vain,
My love were twice bereft ! Hope unto one
Yieldeth a ready harvest, but returns
Scant gleanings to another.

PHILIP

Mindest thou
What harvest once the Master bade us reap—
Tho' we had doubted—when, with but five loaves
And a few fish, the multitude was fed
Beside Bethsaida ?

THOMAS

Verily I mind.
And naught appear'd impossible to Him,

Mors Janua Vitæ

While yet He lived on earth—save He should die !
But since He died, what now less possible—
Than that He lives again ? Yet marvel ye
At this my unbelief ? Nay, now your faith—
I speak but brotherly—awakes in me
Not less a marvel ; for I know, alas,
How well may hope deceive ! Might it not be,
O brethren, that such hope, kindled o'erquick
At yonder empty tomb, was fann'd to flame
By fond desire ; until sense, overwrought,
Gave vision'd ecstasy ? For 'twas alone
Mary of Magdala, who sped her back,
Sorely bewailing that rude hands therefrom
Had borne her Lord away. And when in haste,
At such a summons, John and Peter ran,
They found as she had said—yet unto them
No vision was vouchsafed ! But when again
Mary return'd alone and, weeping, look'd
Within the empty tomb, then thro' her tears
Strange forms were seen ; and spake a voice to her.
Then, she avers, a shadow from without
Fell at the open doorway ; and she turn'd,
Thinking to see the gardener. But her name,
“ Mary,” was whisper'd, and she doth avow
It was the Master's voice ; and leaping up,
She cried “ Rabboni ! ” and for very joy
Had fain embraced Him ; but that He forbade,
And urged her speed with wondrous message thence
Unto His brethren ! O amazing love,
Wherewith a woman loves ! Who, but would speak
Thereof with reverence ; yet who, but knows

The Story of the Twelve

How prone to phantasy ! Nay, 'twere but meet
Her love and gratitude should seek to build
Anew their shatter'd hopes, on whatsoe'er
Some kindly-pitying chance might well afford
To such exacting sorrow.

JOHN

Dost thou think,
In truth, that from expectancy was drawn
Belief so credulous, that it ask'd naught
But pliancy of chance ? Hadst thou but seen
Mary, and those who went with her at dawn,
Thou hadst not thought they did expect to find
An empty tomb for their anointing spice !
Nay, so they fear'd the guard would drive them back,
That Mary said :—" If we may not prevail
To come nigh Him, and do what it is wont
For women to do unto those who die,
And are beloved of them : yet will we set
Before the door our offerings, and will weep
And sore lament, until we home return."
Nor think thou that, at Mary's first alarm,
We sped expecting aught but there to find
The tomb already rifled. I confess
No other thought came to me as I ran
With Peter thither. But when he too came
And boldly enter'd first, ere I had dared,
Somewhat there flash'd on me—nay, scarce a hope—
But a vague peradventured wonderment,
If haply He had risen ! And what think ye,
Thus minister'd thereto ? for naught we saw,

Mors Janua Vitæ

Save but the linen cloths which we had swathed
His lifeless body in. Ah, but at times,
It seems as if the meanest circumstance
Were vested with such strange and mystic power
And pathos of its own—as moves the heart
More deeply than all wonders ! So it was
As if some revelation mutely spake,
More eloquent than words, as turn'd our gaze
Where folded cloths were laid. All suddenly
Their smooth'd and snowy whiteness seem'd to flash
Some secret challenge to the startled eye !
We stood in awe, as those on hallow'd ground
It were impossible that lawless feet
Had trodden, or that impious hands should dare
To rudely violate. Such peace there was,
And order'd preparation as in one
Of a most careful habit, who had waked,
And pass'd unhasting forth unto some task
Awaiting him at dawn ! Then we return'd,
Not yet believing ; but as those to whom
Awed whisperings of life, and not of death,
Had come from yonder tomb !

THOMAS

If 'twere alone

My heart that listen'd, son of Zebedee,
Thy words had slain my doubt ; for I would fain
Have shared thy joy ! Yet doth my reason still
Play the stern sentinel before Hope's door,
And prompt such questionings as may not yield
Unto the heart's entreaty. None may doubt

The Story of the Twelve

That thou, e'en as the women, found at dawn
An empty sepulchre. But other ways
Than one there are, which may thereof account.
'Tis rumour'd that the Chief Priests bribed the guard
To say that, while they slept, His followers
Stole thence their Master's body, with intent
To claim He had arisen ! Well we know
Such charge were scorn'd by us ; yet, of a truth,
Are there not others who with base design
Might seek to do this thing ? For if 'twere thought
He truly had arisen, it may be judged
To what confusion Pilate would be brought
Before Tiberius !

SIMON ZELOTES

Nay, Didymus,

If even some of the night-watch were bribed,
Dost think that Valgus, the Centurion,
Would suffer bribery ? Or yet fear aught
Of earthly menace, be it night or day,
Wherein he stood on guard ? And know we not,
'Tis death ! for Roman sentinel to sleep
While at the post of duty. Could it be
That, overcome by shame, Valgus was bribed
To such confession :—then must Pilate, too,
Be privy to the bargain. Whate'er happ'd
Upon that awful vigil : it was such
As never mortal valour could withstand !
And none have seen the watch, or question'd them ;
For Pilate strictly orders they be kept
Confined to the Prætorium. Yet these things

Mors Janua Vitæ

May not be hid : and Valgus, it is said,
Oft lies as one in trance ; and now upbraids
Himself with cowardice, and then again,
Fiercely avows no living man had faced
Terrors so all-unearthly ! And, in truth,
The bribe of Caiaphas came yet too late
To seal the soldiers' lips. For ere they reach'd
The High Priest's palace, they had met and told
Their comrades at the City gates such things
As soon were whisper'd of. In wild alarm
They all fled back, and tremblingly as those
A sudden palsy seizeth ! When at last
Had sense and speech return'd, Valgus outpour'd
His story of amazing portents seen
Beside the guarded tomb ! And unto me
Repeated one who heard.

All night, 'twas said,

A strange and pitchy darkness seem'd to lie
Oppressive on the watch ; as if 'twould hide
Even from them the very sepulchre !
And each, as moved by strong compulsion, felt
With reassuring hand the well-seal'd stone
Which lay before the door. As dawn drew nigh,
Sudden, a wind arose and sway'd the trees
In Joseph's garden, with melodious sound,
As of strange birds that heralded the morn.
So sweet yet so mysterious was their song
That each in turn upon his fellow look'd,
And listen'd wondering ! And then, lo, swift
The first faint flush of light adorn'd the East :
And Valgus saith that ne'er had he beheld

The Story of the Twelve

Dawn so majestic !—as shaft on shaft
Of radiance upward sped ; and between each
A fleece of cloud, wing-shaped and luminous.
Then did each shaft arch as a bended bow
That spann'd the heavens. But quickly, all con-
verged

With earthward course, as to the very spot
Where Valgus stood :—while as on heavenly stair,
Golden and glorious, each wingèd fleece
Descending swept, with growing semblance seen,
A living form supernal ! At his post
Valgus remain'd all bathed in fiery light
That sear'd his vision, while upon his ears
There fell the sound of mighty beating wings !
Then rock'd the very earth beneath his feet ;
Until at last o'erthrown, he lay awhile
As one aswoon—save only that he heard
A noise as distant thunder. When again
Had sense revived, and he dare lift his eyes,
Lo, the great stone which stood before the tomb
Was backward roll'd ; and on it, and around
The open door, were forms in radiant sheen
And glistening as snow ! Then Valgus knew
That 'gainst such powers unearthly naught avail'd
Of human strife and valour, and he rose
And fled the awful place.

THOMAS

None may deny
That Valgus oft his bravery hath proved
On many a hard-fought field. But well we know

Mors Janua Vitæ

What superstitions vain these Gentiles hold,
Who worship heathen gods ! To such an one—
At such a time and place—how would each sight
And sound of common nature seem but fraught
With dread significance ; until at length,
To his disorder'd mind, would all appear
The quick fulfilment of mysterious words
The Nazarene had spoken—as was known
To the Centurion !

NATHANAEL

Yet dost thou seem—
Who art a son of Israel—to believe
Less in the God of Israel than do these,
Who are but heathen, in their gods believe !
Have not Divine and heavenly powers oft fought
'Gainst Israel's enemies ? What wonder, then,
If even greater marvels be reveal'd
By One so marvellous ?

JOHN

Thou speakest truth,
Nathanael, and most wisely, thus to call
Our judgment of this marvel back to Him
On whom is centred all. Such things as these,
Incredible of others, yet of Him
Seem but to lift unto some higher plane
That spiritual power we were too blind to see
While yet He dwelt with us. Ah, Didymus,
Thine eyes have seen Him not : but thou hast look'd
Upon that empty tomb, and seen therefrom
The ponderous stone roll'd back, as first I saw

The Story of the Twelve

Upon that wondrous morn ! Yet wherefore, then,
Was it found empty ? If now Caiaphas
Truly believes the thing that is averr'd—
Why doth he not arraign us of such charge
Before the Governor ? And if, forsooth,
He holds, himself, the body of our Lord—
Why doth he not produce it, and confound
All rumour of His rising ? Verily,
No thought of resurrection could survive
Disproof so absolute ! And we have heard
Pilate is strangely moved, and talketh much
With Valgus secretly ; for unto him
He bears a great regard.

THOMAS

O would that I
Could solve, as thou hast done, the mystery
Of Joseph's empty tomb ! I could believe,
Truly, such wonders of the Nazarene
As of no other mortal. But He proved
Himself most mortal, too, in that He died !
And if in this He shared our mortal lot—
Tho' in all else unlike—how can I now
Account Him as immortal ? If dost ask,
O son of Zebedee, " Where is He now,
If He is not arisen ? "—I am fain
To ask thee where the Master tarrieth,
If He be risen truly ? Eight days since,
Ye saw Him first and last ! Why, if return'd
Thus from the dead, hath He withdrawn again
So quickly from the living ? But one day—

Mors Janua Vitæ

A day of nimble marvels—He appear'd !
And unto whom ?—First to the Magdalene.
Then also unto Simon, when alone,
And afterwards unto the twain, enwrapp'd
With new-reported wonders, as they walk'd
Unto Emmaus. And at eventide
To all who gather'd here, midst strange alarms
And spurr'd imaginings. Yet, I had thought
He first had braved His triumph in the face
Of those who crucified Him !—Caiaphas,
Or even Pilate ! And yet who hath heard
Aught of these things ?

Alas, I may not find
An answer to my thoughts : save only such
As deepens my despair. Except, indeed,
He should Himself appear, with print of nails
Upon His hands and feet !—not visible
To sight alone—but so that I may touch,
Beyond the chance of doubt. . . .

SIMON PETER

Stay ! Thou dost ask
Such proof as none but He Himself can give.
Yet would I in some lesser way, perchance,
Seek also to persuade thee. God forbid
That I should boast of greater faith than thine,
Or deeper love, who have but little cause
For aught but shame ! Yet by the shamèd heart,
Low-bending, may truth's footprints be discern'd,
Which otherwise were miss'd. 'Twas meet and right
Such love as look'd from Mary's tear-dimm'd eyes

The Story of the Twelve

Should first behold the Lord, and to her ears
Should first be borne His greeting—than to such
As Caiaphas or Pilate ! Ever thus
The deepest need was wont to win from Him
The speediest response. And so it was
That Mary's rapturous joy first waked my hope,
And gave new meaning to my name, as link'd
With the angelic tidings :—" Go your way,
To His Disciples and to *Peter* tell,
He shall be seen of them in Galilee."

" To Peter " !—Ah, but wherefore unto me—
Thus singled out by name ? Then memory
Flash'd back His look upon me, as He pass'd
And heard my third denial of Him there,
Within the palace court : and suddenly
There fell the crow of cock ! So now my soul
Heard, as from out the deeps, a mystic call
It needs must answer, and I thought me not
Of distant Galilee ; for desperate need
Urged desperate venture.—Thus alone I went
Again at noon unto that empty tomb,
As one unto a tryst he scarce dare keep—
Yet less may dare to break !

And then it happ'd,
That as I knelt and pray'd beneath the trees
In Joseph's garden, presently, methought,
I heard a gentle voice !—and yet again,
Seem'd it but whispering leaves ! Then, clear the
words :

" Simon, it is thy Lord ! " With fearful joy
I raised mine eyes ; and lo, my Master stood

Mors Janua Vitæ

With hands outstretch'd toward me ; and I saw
The print of nails thereon ! Aloud I cried,
“ My Lord and Master ! ” But as one who claim'd
Beyond his right, then—“ Nay, for dost Thou know
That I denied Thee thrice, in Thy dread hour
Of mortal danger 'spite my vaunted boast
That I would ne'er forsake Thee ! ” Then again
All gently spake He : “ Yet have I forgiven,
For thou who didst deny, didst first confess
'Thou art the Christ.' ” At such amazing words,
I cried, “ My Lord, indeed ! For who but Thou
Couldst so forgive ? ” Then had I clasp'd His
feet ;

But said He : “ Touch me not ! but go thou
hence :

Strengthen thy brethren, now thou art confirm'd.”
Thereat again I bow'd my head in shame :
For spake He not once more the self-same words
He spake me, ere my boast ! When I at last
Dare lift mine eyes to look the gratitude
No words could frame ; lo, He had vanishèd
Without or sound or sign ! And, tho' I search'd,
I saw Him not again.

Yet, Didymus,
Doubtest thou me ? There are some things the
heart,

Once knowing, ne'er may question : and if doubt
Should e'er deny that vision to my sight,
Yet would my heart assure me that none else
Than my loved Master thus communed with me
Awhile in Joseph's garden !

The Story of the Twelve

THOMAS

If I speak
Still doubtingly, it is almost with shame
That so I must. For who may hear such words,
Simon, as thine, and yet not feel thereat
His heart with envy burn? But I would ask,
Tho' with all tenderness—if in thy thoughts,
Deep sorrow and remorse did not dispose
To yearnings over-quick to shadow forth
The things most dearly hoped? Ah, well I know
How from the Master's lips thou wouldest long
Forgiving words to hear! Such longing, fired
By Mary's joy, would hope for equal chance
Of meeting Him also.—Thou soughtest it;
And to thine o'erwrought sense, how would all seem
To hap as thou couldst wish!

NATHANAEL

Yet, Didymus—
Thou dost appear to find thy human fears
Confirm'd alone wherein thou measurest
Man prone to self-deception. Hast thou thought
Of all wherein this seemeth in accord
With our own Prophecies?

ANDREW

Are not the words
He spake Himself, as worthy as our doubts?
And thus it was that after He had died
I ventured them. And at the Paschal feast
He spake as One who for a little while

Mors Janua Vitæ

Must needs depart—but would come back again ;
Yea, and would turn our sorrow to such joy
As none might take away !

THOMAS

Ofttimes a word
Or thought, that is much play'd on by the mind,
Will from a tiny lodgment slow usurp
The larger place of reason ; till at last,
E'en as a pamper'd child his parent rules,
So doth a man become the willing slave
Of fancy, too indulged ! Oft have I dwelt
On those amazing words : and may but think
He meant that in some mystic sense alone
He would return ;—a gracious influence
To heart and memory, with comfort fraught
As ever came He to us. Was He not
In discourse ever rare and mystical ?—
Yet was there naught, methinks, in that He said,
Which would imply more than, alas, is found
In His most mortal end ! Once wrapp'd in death !—
Can the material body rise again,
Returning to the haunts it erstwhile knew ?—
It is impossible !

JAMES

I am a man
Of speech and purpose plain ; and given not
To vain imaginings, as well ye know.
Nor claim I any knowledge of what lies
Beyond the veil of sense ; nor what may be

The Story of the Twelve

The bond 'twixt soul and body. None hath seen
The spirit animate again the flesh,
Which knoweth death's corruption—save in one,
Lazarus our friend and His. Doth it seem strange,
If He who thus restored to Lazarus
Alone his earthly body ! should Himself
Possess far mightier power to now assume
Spirit or flesh at will ?

Thou wert not here,
When Cleopas and Luke upon us burst
With their amazing tidings : for to them
He also had appear'd, as sore perplex'd
They walk'd towards Emmaus. One drew nigh,
Who sought their company upon the way,
And ask'd them of their sadness. When they
told—

He gently chided them as having err'd
In knowledge of the Scriptures ; and they vow
That ne'er before had they such wisdom heard,
From Israel's greatest masters. Then He spake,
To their amaze, as one who doubted not
That He they mourn'd must be the very Christ !
Entranced and awed, they came to their abode,
Whereat He bade farewell : but they constrain'd
Him to abide, since far the day was spent.
So enter'd He and sat at meat with them,
And all His words and actions seem'd to breathe
Such gracious dignity—as He were host,
And they but passing guests ! Then unto them,
While yet He bless'd the bread, His upraised face
Strangely familiar grew : and as He brake

Mors Janua Vitæ

And handed it to them, did look and act
The manner of the Master so recall,
They gazed in silent awe—and on His hands
Beheld the print of nails ! Ere speech return'd,
Or they could rise and throw restraining arms
About Him in their joy, quick from their sight
He vanish'd utterly ! Then sped they back
In breathless haste ; but we could scarce believe
Their wondrous story. And while still we sat
And marvell'd at it here,—lo, suddenly
The Lord Himself appear'd within our midst,
As thou hast even heard !

MATTHEW

How little yet
Know we of all this mystery enwraps !
And surely He, who thus hath whetted keen
Our wonder and our longing, will return
And satisfy our hearts. And if, indeed,
He is arisen—then, with such power Divine,
Must He not be Messiah ? Didymus,
If yet thine eyes should see Him—wouldst thou not
Believe Him very Christ ?

THOMAS

How doth a word—
So small a word—yet make a difference
So vast and wonderful ! “ If ” I had seen
As thou ! Ah, but if thou as I, forsooth,
Hadst seen Him not !—wouldst thou have so
believed ?

The Story of the Twelve

And wherefore should my doubt seem, then, to thee
Less credible, than unto me—thy faith?
The story told by Cleopas and Luke,
Moveth my heart to yearning—so it blends
Supernal things with wistful humanness!
Yet in the twain—as others—how would grief
And mystery unconsciously await
Hope's fondly-quick illusion! Thus it happ'd,
A gracious stranger, versed in Israel's lore,
Their brooding minds entranced;—until there sprang
Some chance resemblance unto certainty
That He the Master was! Yet so again
He vanish'd from their sight; and naught was left
To them—as e'en to others—but a dream
And vision beautiful!

But thou didst ask,
Matthew—If I should now with mine own eyes
Even behold Him, would I then believe
He were Messiah—Christ! Yea, verily,
For such an One who could upraise Himself,
Must greater prove to be than if He ne'er
Had died at all! and scarce of Him I know
What I could not believe! Yet what are these
But vain surmisings and most idle words?—
Since never one so rose. For Lazarus,
Of whom ye speak, raised not himself from death!
But only at the Master's word came forth
From out his grave, as one awaked from sleep.
Sleep! Death!—Who knoweth? Did not Jesus say,
“I go that I may wake him out of sleep?”
And even so it seem'd. But of Himself

Mors Janua Vitæ

He said not He would *sleep* ! The crucified
Is not asleep but dead ! Who shall wake Him,
As He waked Lazarus ? O mystery
Beyond the reach of hope ; for now all hope
Hath surely died with Him from whom it sprang.
But stay ! Tho' why repeat it ? if to chafe
Your patient spirits and to goad anew
My own despair. Yet so I am constrain'd
For very sorrow's sake ! . . . Except I see
With mine own eyes the nail-prints in His hands,
And put therein my finger ; and within
His wounded side, my hand—then will I not
Believe He hath arisen ! . . .

*[A hush falls upon the assembled Disciples
at this repeated declaration of unbelief from
Thomas ; and after a pause they become
conscious of a mysterious presence in their
midst, which, as before, gradually assumes
the visible form of their Master.]*

PHILIP

List ! Heard ye aught . . . ?

THOMAS

'Tis but the wind. Yet doth it strangely sound !

ANDREW

As one that softly breathes !

JAMES

Yea, as before !

The Story of the Twelve

THOMAS

[*pointing*

See! Who is there? . . . Like . . . ! Nay, it
cannot be . . .

By yonder bolted door!—and yet! . . .

SIMON ZELOTES

Again!

NATHANAEL

As eight days since!

JOHN

Behold, it is the Lord!—

See, Didymus!—He comes!

SIMON PETER

In very truth!

Master! All hail!

(CHORUS OF VOICES)

All hail!

ANDREW

Hush! Lo, He speaks!

[*The Risen Lord advances, and turning, with
outstretched hands, addresses Himself directly
to Thomas.*

Peace be to you!

Thomas! thy finger reach,
And see my hands. And hither reach thy hand,
And put it in my side:—and be not thou
Faithless, but believing!

Mors Janua Vitæ

THOMAS [*casting himself down*

My Lord ! My God !

THE LORD

Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed :
Blessèd are they that have not seen, and yet
Have e'en believed.

[He vanishes again as mysteriously as He had entered.]

SIMON PETER

Stay ! Master, bide with us—
Wherefore depart again ?

PHILIP

Stay ! yet awhile.
Lo, now none doubteth Thee !

JAMES

Ah, leave us not !
Forgive us, Lord, that so we fled in fear
And did forsake Thee !

SIMON ZELOTES

Yea, and ask of us
Whate'er Thou wilt ; and Thou shalt find us true
In heart and hand for aye !

JOHN

Peace ! 'Tis enough.
Lo, He hath vanish'd even as before !
But who may doubt 'twas He that stood and spake

The Story of the Twelve

Within our midst ? Twice hath He now appear'd
And been by all beholden ;—save by thee,
O Didymus, who hast but seen Him once.
Nay, dost yet doubt ? that thou art still afraid
To lift thine eyes ! Fain would I, for thy sake,
That He had tarried longer !

THOMAS

Fear thee not,
O son of Zebedee ! It doth suffice
That once mine eyes have seen my Lord and
God !
Ye heard me vow that I would not believe,
Except I could behold Him ; yea, and touch
His wounded hands and side ! Then hearken ye,
My brethren, unto this my vow anew :—
If these mine eyes should ne'er again behold
My blessèd Lord ! yet would I doubt no more,
That once, indeed, He hath appear'd to me !
Nay, now my heart is torn 'twixt joy and shame ;
And scarce I know which of the twain would greet
His dear return the more.

SIMON PETER

O Didymus,
As once our faith amazed thee, so at thine
Do we now marvel, for, despite thy vow,
Thou soughtest not to touch ! It was enough
That He appear'd and spake : and lo, thy lips
Confess'd Him with such words as we ne'er dared—
“ My Lord and God ! ” . . .

Mors Janua Vitæ

ANDREW

Ay, they were wondrous words !
Yet Simon, thou didst once at Cæsarea,
Long ere He died, confess Him as the Christ :
Son of the living God !

SIMON PETER

And spake I truth.
Yet more in rash ambition thus to win
His favour, than that I knew truly aught
Whereof I spake. But now the truth leapt forth,
Wrung as from depths of reason'd unbelief,
Convincing 'gainst conviction ! We indeed
Were well assured the Nazarene had risen,
And judged Him the Messiah : tho' scarce yet
Dare we invest that name with power Divine
As the Eternal's own ! But thou at last—
Who doubted longest—wert e'en yet the first
To grasp that awful truth ! How didst thou come
So swiftly thither ?—And what meantest thou
By such great words ?

THOMAS

Now am I shamed, indeed,
Of my so stubborn doubt against ye all.
Yet more it shames me if thereby ye deem'd
I loved the Master less, or less appraised
His greatness ere He died. Thro' these eight
days,
Thought's mere "perchance" as to His having
risen—

The Story of the Twelve

Tho' unbeliev'd by me—ever return'd
And wistfully would link itself with all
My reverent love of Him. And yet my love
Dare not believe it true ; for very awe
Of the stupendous meaning that should lie
Within its proven truth ! For unto me,
Upon that truth hung all Hope's universe
In glorious perfection,—or it lay
The sport of cruel fate !

And think ye, then,
I could do other than outpour my soul
In such confession ; when He answer'd thus
My boastful-doubting challenge ? As His form
Not only met my gaze, but His own voice
Gave echo to my too-familiar words ;
Then all my inmost being stood enthral'd,
As 'fore the Light Eternal, self-reveal'd,
And God in Him I knew ! His hands, His feet !—
Nay, I dare not have touch'd them, for too plain
I saw the wound-prints there, and all their shame
Became transfigured with the hidden sense
Of such triumphant and immortal power
As but to God belongs ! Yea, now behold,
He hath transcended all ; for He who dies
And doth arise again, of His own will,
Liveth as ne'er before !

PHILIP

And thinkest thou,
He will return to us, and be again
Our Master as of old . . . ?

Mors Janua Vitæ

SIMON ZELOTES

And swiftly bring
The Kingdom of Messiah . . . ?

THOMAS

Who shall say
What may His purpose be ? Yet now, methinks,
It is not all as we imagined it
While still He lived and wrought among us here ;—
Or else He scarce had died ! For is it not
Within the light of this transcendent sign,
Which crowneth all, that we shall find fulfill'd
The secret of His Being ? Fears my heart
To lose what it hath found : yet scarce dare hope
To hold as once it held.—For it is clear
He is endow'd with powers beyond the scope
Of earthly keeping ! But 'tis not in me
To judge of such great things, who, last of all,
Believed in His arising.

JOHN

None may tell
What followeth so great a mystery,
As baffles human sense. Yet, Didymus,
Now could I almost bless thee for the doubt
I late rebuked ! for else we had not seen
The Lord, perchance, this night, nor heard the words
Wherewith thou didst confess Him. Scarce till then
Had we conceived the full and awful truth
Of this His resurrection : and our hearts,
Thro' thine, beheld more than our eyes had seen !
Both Lord and God He is !

The Story of the Twelve

Doubtless in Him

There dwelt a Spirit of supernal might
Which, with Divine intent, did so assume
Humanity awhile. Yet thro' the veil
That hung between, there brake at times a light
Of such unearthly radiance as had warn'd
Our hearts for even this ! So happ'd it once
When He bade three of us ascend with Him
Great Hermon, where He oft would spend the night
Alone in prayer. And there at earliest dawn
We suddenly awoke, for all the Mount
In radiance shone, and lo, the Master's face
With glory was transfigured ! And with Him
Two spirit forms communed, yet in such-wise,
As left us doubting not they needs must be
E'en Moses and Elias ! But they spake
As those who comforted the soul of one
Against some awful woe. And ere had pass'd
The wonder from us, came a heavenly voice
Confirming all ! We told not of it then
Unto the rest, for He had strictly charged :
" Tell no man of the vision, till again
The Son of Man be risen from the dead."
And James and Simon will bear witness now
If I speak not the truth !

SIMON PETER

He hath unseal'd
Our lips Himself ! . . .

JAMES

Since from the dead He rose ! . . .

Mors Janua Vitæ

JOHN

Amazed I am—now all that glory bursts
Upon my soul again—how blindness still
Could hide the truth thereof ! Hadst thou been there,
O Didymus, methinks thou hadst believed
Him very God, e'en then !

THOMAS

Nay, tho' I fain
Had shared thy wondrous vision, yet my heart
As thine, for very love, would have refused
To own its dread behest. But since He rose,
Hath He not proved that first He needs must die,
As oft-times He implied ? The vision seen
By thee on Hermon but exalts His death,
As if with heavenly sanctions—foreordain'd
Of the Eternal's will !

NATHANAEL

And of such things
Straightway the risen Lord spake to the twain
While walking to Emmaus: Verily,
Did not Esaias tell of One, despised,
Of men rejected, and with grief acquaint :
Whose soul, outpour'd in death, should yet be made
An offering for sin ! By all such signs
Hath not the Master proved Himself to be
The true Messiah ? And yet, alas, that we
Should wait so dread a proof, ere to our hearts
The wonder was reveal'd ! And even now
Is He exalted unto such a sphere
We may not share with Him.—For but in part

The Story of the Twelve

Hath He resumed the form that held Him kin
To our humanity ! Can such an One
Return to us again, and be in all,
That which He was before ?

PHILIP

Oh, say thou not
He will return no more ! Did He not come
But now to Didymus to prove alone
That He had risen ? Surely He will not leave
All other questionings unsatisfied
In our expectant hearts !

JOHN

May not such hope
Abide within us still ? For when at first
He re-appear'd to us but eight days since,
Spake He not then as unto those for whom
Some great commission waits ? Who may reveal
Further such things—unless it be Himself ?
E'en when and where He will.

ANDREW

So may it be.
Yet mind ye not His words that awful night,
As from the Paschal feast we made our way
Unto Gethsemane ? So strange they were
That scarce we heeded them ; but now therein
We may find comfort—" After I am risen,
I go before you into Galilee."

SIMON PETER

Yea, and I mind me now that from the first
His message borne by women from the tomb

Mors Janua Vitæ

And heralded of angels—e'en to me—
Bade us to Galilee, where, it was said,
He would be seen of us !

SIMON ZELOTES

Then speedily
Must we go thither ; for the feast is o'er,
And scarcely here will He appear again,
Tho' we should tarry.

JOHN

Whether here or there—
With joy we wait His will ; for all know now
That He is truly risen . . . all save one . . .
Alas, that one there was, who might not share
Joy so Divinely great ! For pity's sake
May memory keep silence, lest our lips
Grow bitter with his name !

SIMON PETER

My memory
Itself sufficeth, in remembering
I thrice denied my Lord. Mercy so great
As I received, leaveth scant room for aught
Save merciful remembrance : else my shame
Were still shamed threefold !

THOMAS

Nor yet may I judge
Of what another did unto his Lord—
Whom also I denied by stubborn doubt !
If judgment had but meted each his due,

The Story of the Twelve

What were we now ? Since He hath temper'd mine
With so great pity :—shall not, then, the thought
That unto Judas only hath been dealt
His full and awful measure ! leave my joy
With chastening self-wonder ?

Yea, All hail !

To Him who died—Jesus the Nazarene—
As once we knew Him. But now, of a truth,
Messiah !—The great Conqueror of death :
Endued with Power Eternal : evermore
My Lord and God indeed !

PHILIP

Glory to Him,
True King of Israel, who will surely yet
Return to reign with us . . . !

SIMON ZELOTES

And full restore
The Kingdom unto Israel—once again
The joy of the whole earth !

SIMON PETER

Hail to the Christ :
Son of the living God !

NATHANAEL

And verily,
None less than He of David's royal line,
Whom Moses and the Prophets long foretold !

MATTHEW

Yet did His heart with tender pity move
Toward the lowliest ; yea, was He friend

Mors Janua Vitæ

Of publicans and sinners ! Be it mine
Henceforth to pen such wisdom and such grace
As ne'er before by word or deed were known
Among the sons of men.

JAMES (*the son of Alphæus*)

And be it told,
That to the least among His followers,
As to the greatest, He hath ever shown
A spirit, gracious beyond words to praise
Or service to repay !

JUDAS THADDÆUS

We have received
Beyond all we have render'd. Tell it forth
In everlasting honour to His name,
Whoso shall write thereof !

JAMES

All praise to Him
Who, living once again, hath crown'd Himself
With immortality ! Now unto us
May grace be given to serve Him steadfastly,
Tho' we be provèd even unto death !

JOHN

Behold the Lamb of God !—e'en as long since
The Baptist first proclaim'd Him. Now at last
We see—beyond all John e'er thought or knew—
The prophecy fulfill'd ! So laid He down
His life, of His own will ; and as He said,
By His own will hath taken it again !
Yet now we know not fully : but hath dawn'd

The Story of the Twelve

For us the Light which shineth more and more
Unto the perfect day. Henceforth be ours
To watch for further signs from such an One
As still, methinks, shall be the wonderment
Of coming ages ! But e'en now I know
'Tis Love Divine that lieth at the heart
Of all His hidden purpose ; and in Him
Hath grown to fulness in such grace and truth
As ne'er the law thro' Moses could reveal !
Yea, 'twas th' Eternal Love which bade Him seek
The semblance of humanity awhile,
And dwell as Light in darkness. We beheld
In Him the Logos of the living God,
Made flesh among us ; that all men should find
True light and life for aye, in Him alone.
Glory be unto Him who raiseth up
Our hopes—e'en with Himself—from death to life
Triumphant and Immortal !

Peace to all !

Let love and faith, by patience, prove themselves
In waiting His return. Now fare ye well !

ANDREW

Hath He not promised, and did He e'er fail
His promise to fulfil ? We will await
Till He returneth unto us again,
Here or in Galilee—Farewell !

(CHORUS OF VOICES)

Farewell !

He will return again !

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